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THE MAN IN RED; or, THE GHOST OF THE OLD GUARD.

A STORY OF THE BURNING OF MOSCOW.

BY CAPT. FREDERICK WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF "NEMO, KING OF THE TRAMPS," "RED RUDIGER," "THE RUSSIAN SPY," "THE RED RAJAH," "THE IRISH CAPTAIN,"
"DEATH'S HEAD CUIRASSIERS," "PHANTOM KNIGHTS," ETC., ETC.



"FRIEDLAND! ROUSTAN! HERE!" SHOUTED THE EMPEROR. "SEIZE THAT-THING!"

The Man in Red;

OR,

The Ghost of the Old Guard.

A Story of the Burning of Moscow.

BY CAPT. FRED. WHITTAKER,

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CHAPTER I.

THE MAN IN RED.

CRADLED in the bosom of the hills, lies a little spring, from which trickles a stream of water, too feeble to float the smallest boat or turn the humblest mill.

A mere thread of silver, it winds in and out among the daisies and violets of early spring, when the snows are beginning to melt on Jungfrau and Wetterhorn.

Yet it gurgles along as musically as Strauss's famous waltz; and the ebb and flow of the dance never fails to bring to mind the baby river Danube.

On goes the tiny stream, glittering in the sunlight, till it hears another, another, and yet another calling to it and hurrying down to meet it from the Swabian Alps like children afraid to be left alone.

They join together and dash on, laughing, and the baby rivulet has become a rushing, impetuous stream, that goes careering on, like a colt let loose in the meadows in springtime.

On its banks rise the towers of Ulm; a little further on the roaring Lech comes tearing down from the Tyrol to join it at Donawertle, and the blue Danube has become a river.

On it sweeps past Ingolstadt and Ratisbon and hundreds of towns and villages, till the black Isar flows in at Straubing, and the mightiest of all—the rushing Inn—joins its waters at Passau.

Now we can say indeed we have seen a river fit for kings to sail on, and we float over the beautiful, blue Danube, till before us rise the historic walls of Vienna.

There is the grand tower of St. Stephen's; there stand the palaces of the haughty Hapsburgs; there is the home of Mozart, Beethoven, and many another lord of the world of music, and on the bridges is the glitter of bayonets.

But what is yonder flag that floats from the towers of Schonbrunn? It does not show the white field and black eagle of Austria.

No, by heavens! it is the tricolor, with its broad folds of red, white and blue. *The French are in Vienna!*

Yes, the French are in Vienna, and far below the city, on the banks of the Danube and covering the island of Lobau from end to end, are long lines of tents, banks of earth, dotted with cannon, while the music of a hundred bands fills the evening air.

French uniforms are in the streets of Vienna; French hussars dash to and fro with orders; French artillerymen on the island of Lobau are looking grimly over their guns at the distant lines of the Austrians, and the black bear-skin shakos of the Imperial Guard are gathered in a dark mass round one grand marquee, where all the army knows the great Napoleon lodges.

The sun sinks to rest on the side of France, and the stars come out in the hot, sultry night of the 4th of July, 1809.

Far away over the ocean, in another land, the rockets are bursting into stars, and the bonfires are blazing to celebrate the birthday of a nation destined to throw all the glories of old Rome and imperial France into the shade; but around Vienna all is quiet on the night of the 4th of July, 1809.

The bands have ceased to play, one after another; the camp-fires have died into ashes; the soldiers, wrapped in their gray capotes, are sleeping by the fires; the long lines of troop horses munch their hay by the picket ropes; the sentries pace silently up and down like shadows, and over all the stars look down with the same passionless calm with which they have beheld Roman, German, Hun, Goth, Vandal, Turk and Gaul, striving for the mastery of Vienna in the thousands of years that have passed over it.

In the midst of the camp all the tents are dark save one, the great marquee around which the Old Guard sleeps.

This stands like a beacon in the midst of the army, and one may see figures going and coming till a late hour.

Every now and then comes a clanking and rattling in the outer darkness, as an officer rides off with dispatches, and there is a low buzz of conversation, inside and out.

The night wears on, and the figures come and go less frequently, till at last a tall officer, in general's uniform, comes out of the tent and says in a low voice:

"Admit no more to-night, sentry. His majesty wishes to sleep."

"Very good, my general," answers the grim old sentry. Then he marches up and down on

his lonely post, while the general goes into the tents, and the lights are extinguished in the huge marquee.

At the rear of this marquee, which serves as an antechamber thereto, are two other tents, and in the furthest a lamp still burns, and will burn all night.

The sentry paces up and down, and looks at the distant lights of Vienna and the few dull red lanterns which mark the place of the batteries by the river shore. He feels the contrast of the silence to the bustle of the day, and mutters:

"Pest! I wish it were over, this accursed lying still. We've beaten these Austrians so often that it doesn't seem natural for the Guard to be lying behind works."

Then he hears the great clock of St. Stephen's Cathedral toll out the hour of twelve, and halts to listen.

The deep, solemn tones of the bell that boom so mournfully down the valley of the Danube have their influence even on the grizzled veteran of Lodi and Marengo. He stands still and crosses himself involuntarily, muttering, for the first time in years, the prayers he was taught when Louis the Martyr was king of France and the old soldier was a boy.

One by one the strokes boom out, and the tremulous air repeats them in a dying cadence, inexpressibly solemn.

And just then, at the last strike of the midnight hour, a cold wind fans the face of the motionless sentry, and something flits past him, noiselessly, toward the marquee.

What it is he cannot tell; but the cold sweat bursts out on his forehead as he catches up his musket, and hoarsely challenges:

"*Qui va là!*"

Then he rubs his eyes. There is nothing there, and he begins to think he must have been asleep on his post and dreamed it.

Presently, within the marquee, he hears the startled exclamation:

"*Qui vient?*" [Who comes?]

The aide-de-camp, who had thrown himself, dressed, on a rough bed, to watch beside the emperor, springs up with a pistol in his hand.

He sees the figure of a man in the dark marquee, faintly visible by the light that shines through the canvas of the inner tent.

The man seems to be tall and thin, and is dressed entirely in red, with a face of ghastly white and a long pointed mustache and chin beard of black. So much he can see; also that the man has brilliant black eyes; then he calls out menacingly:

"*Who are you?*"

Click! clack!

The long pistol is cocked, and the officer says a third time:

"*Who are you?*"

And then, to his intense amazement, the red figure motions him to fire and advances straight toward him.

The officer advances to eject the bold intruder, for he does not like to fire on an unarmed man, when The Man in Red, silently as a ghost, seems to vanish into thin air against a red-lined cloak that hangs on the tent-pole, and when the watchful officer lays his hand on it and finds nothing, he mutters:

"*Morbleu! M. le Comte de Friedland*, you should not eat a Strasbourg pie after ten at night. I believe I must have been dreaming. I hope I've not disturbed his majesty by my noise."

Very quietly he returns to his couch, and yet the influence of the vision disturbs him. He fancies he hears voices.

Presently he is sure of it. They come from the emperor's tent; and the Count of Friedland, aide-de-camp to the Emperor of the French, says to himself:

"What the deuce is this? There was no one in there when I instructed the sentry."

He pinches himself, in doubt, to find if he be awake, and finally says:

"I must risk it."

Then he goes softly to the first inner tent and looks in.

Across the door, on a rich Persian rug, lies Roustan, the Mameluke, his cimier on his breast within his folded arms, one hand, relaxed in sleep, half-closed over a pistol butt, his dark, bearded face peaceful in repose.

The aide-de-camp looks down.

"I thought it must be he," he mutters.

But still there are voices in the inner tent, and one of them is the voice of the emperor himself.

He can see on the tent wall the grand outline of that head, so famous throughout Europe for its classic beauty of outline; and opposite, another shadow-head, which reminds him of the legendary pictures of the Evil One.

There is the long pointed nose and chin; the spiky up-turned mustache; the close cap, with little ears like horns, and a high pitched, sneering voice is speaking, while the spiky mustache moves up and down.

"You think you have made yourself," says the voice, mockingly. "Ho! ho! It is like all of you. I tell you it is time for you to turn back. You have come too far east."

"I have been further east before," answers

the calm voice of the emperor; "and never failed to beat my foes. As for you, I have only to raise my voice to have you stripped of your disguise and exposed."

The listener in the outer tent hears the same mocking laugh.

"Ho! ho! try it. You boast that you are the first man in Europe. A continent trembles at your nod. But I fear you not. Ho! ho! I am your master. I made you. Ho! ho!"

Convinced that some madman has stolen into the tent, the aide-de-camp stirs the sleeping Mameluke with his foot, and in a moment Roustan is awake.

The other signs him to silence, and they noiselessly traverse the tent and look in. There sits the emperor by his table, spread with maps, and on the other side stands a tall, preternaturally thin man, dressed in red, in whom the officer recognizes his vision.

The emperor is paler even than his wont, and looks up at the corpse-like face, with its dark, flaming eyes, as if measuring intellect with intellect, as he replies slowly:

"Thou liest. I made myself the first in Europe, and I will be first in the world, with no help from thee."

The Man in Red smiles. He does not laugh; but there is a singular tone of triumphant mockery in his voice, as he answers:

"Be it so. I took thee, a puny boy in the walks of Brienne, and have made of thee, step by step, general, consul, emperor, victor on fifty fields. Thou hast passed Cæsar; but I am thy master. Now hear me. I give thee six years more. In the seventh thou shalt be chained to a rock in the midst of the sea, with the vultures of despair to gnaw thy heart."

The emperor smiles scornfully.

"Madman, I laugh at thy prophecies. Who art thou, to tell the future?"

The Man in Red looks down on him in a singular way. His eyes seem to be trying to overawe those of the emperor.

"Who I am, thou knowest not," he says, in his strange, unnatural voice. "I have placed thee where thou art, for the sake of a woman. Thy fate and hers are bound together with bands that cannot be broken, without breaking thee. Beware, I know what is in thy heart to-night."

The emperor shrugs his shoulders.

"I will tell thee at once. I intend to cross the river and beat these Austrians."

"And then?" demands The Man in Red.

"And then make peace with them, as I have done before."

"And then?" asks The Man in Red.

"And then return to France with another victory to inscribe on my standards. And now, Master Prophet, tell me, if thou canst, what will be the issue of this battle?"

"Thou hast said it," returned The Man in Red. "Thou shalt return to France victorious. But beware. It will be thy last decisive victory. Thy star is in the zenith. From henceforth it must wane, till it sinks behind the rock on the ocean."

Again the emperor laughs scornfully.

"Since thou knowest so much, tell me when I shall next see thee?"

"Thou shalt see me at Fontainebleau, this time next year. After that, no more, till we meet in Moscow."

For the first time the emperor looks surprised and repeats:

"In Moscow? I have no thought of going there. But be it so. I may take a fancy to conquer Russia, and if I do, be sure I will go to Moscow."

Then the two listeners see a leer of evil import contort the demoniac face of The Man in Red, as he answers:

"Thou shalt go to Moscow, but beware of the Russian bear. He lives in the snow and makes his lair in the ice-caves. All thy fires shall be quenched before the snow-drifts of the steppes. Farewell!"

"Not so fast," returns the emperor, in his old scornful tones. "I have listened to thee patiently. Now cast aside this mummery and tell me who thou art, and how thou camest here."

"Ho! ho!" retorts The Man in Red. "Ho! ho! He asks who I am?"

And he laughs in the same shrill way as before, till the emperor cries out:

"Friedland! Roustan! Here!" shouted the emperor. "Seize that—thing!"

The listeners only waited for the word, and they dash aside the curtain and rush to grasp the intruder, who stands on the opposite side of the table. They think they have him.

In that same instant the lamp on the table is blown out; they hear a slight noise in the corner of the tent; and grasp nothing.

The Man in Red has vanished.

There is a short search, inside the tent and then out, but no traces are found of the midnight visitor. Finally the emperor says composedly:

"It is some madman, and they are very cunning. Light the lamp again, and let us try to sleep."

And silence rests over the tent again.

In the dawn of morning the aide-de-camp looks into the inner tent, and sees the calm, pale

face of the emperor, who is sleeping like a child. He whispers to Roustan:

"Have you ever seen The Man in Red before last night?"

Roustan nods gravely.

"He came first the night before the coronation. He came before Austerlitz; he came before Jena; he came at Tilsit. We have never yet caught him."

CHAPTER II.

FONTAINEBLEAU.

THE battle of Wagram was over; the Austrian eagle had drooped his wings for the third time, and the Emperor of the French was undisputedly the first man in Europe. The winter of 1809 had passed away, and with it a great change came over Paris and France.

On the 15th of December, the Emperor of the French and the Empress Josephine were divorced by mutual consent; and, a few weeks afterward, amid the boom of cannon, a new empress entered Paris, the daughter of the Hapsburgs.

The spring of 1810 passed away, and the summer opened with peace brooding over France, and Europe tranquil.

The Spaniards were troublesome, to be sure, and the English held the seas; but they were regarded as of small importance, and the emperor did not leave his capital. France, rich, prosperous and triumphant, was at peace.

It was in these happy days, when all the world seemed to be at the feet of the Man of Destiny; when successful soldiers were made counts, dukes and princes; when Murat was King of Naples, Davoust Prince of Eckmühl, Ney Duke of Elchingen; Joseph and Louis Bonaparte Kings of Spain and Holland; when all appeared secure, and a new dynasty permanently established in France, that a gentleman, who was riding from the forest of Fontainebleau toward the palace, followed by a mounted servant, suddenly checked his horse and ejaculated:

"By heavens, I had forgotten."

He was a handsome gentleman, in a rich and picturesque dress, half military, but belonging to no arm of the service.

An expert in matters of ceremonial at the French court would have interpreted his uniform at once. It belonged to the previous century, with its velvet coat, square skirted and heavily laced with gold, its three-cornered hat, straight sword and huge boots; while the wolf's head, on the buttons, and embroidered on the corners of the saddle-cloth, announced the gentleman to be, in all probability, Grand Louvetier of the Court—in plain English, Head Wolf-killer of France. The office was one of honor and high pay, with the minimum of duty to be performed; and the learned in such matters would have told you that the present Grand Louvetier—in 1810—was Gabriel, Count of Friedland, General of Cavalry, commanding the Cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard.

And it was Count Gabriel who suddenly said, that day, as he stopped his horse:

"By heavens, I had forgotten."

He was not speaking to any one in particular; but his attendant, a tall, bony man, with black eyes and a white mustache, nevertheless answered:

"I can go back for it, my general, if you will tell me what it is."

Count Gabriel smiled.

"It is nothing, Casse Tete. But to-day is the Fourth of July."

Casse Tete looked mystified.

"Yes, my general. That goes without saying. To-morrow night will be the anniversary of Wagram, that is, of the crossing. Ah, my general, we had no chance that day; the infantry had it all to themselves. Even the old Death's Heads did not get into it."

The count looked as if he were not in a mood to attend to his old follower's reminiscences. He sat brooding, and at last said, abruptly:

"Casse Tete, did you ever hear of The Man in Red?"

Casse Tete instantly crossed himself, and his face fell.

"The Man in Red! Eh, my general, but yes. That is, not directly. I never saw him myself. You know the cavalry don't do guard duty. But I have heard stories from the grenadiers—Ugh!"

And the old soldier shook himself as if the subject were a pestful.

Count Gabriel had always allowed his confidential servant, Casse Tete, a great deal of liberty in conversation. They had been private soldiers together, a company of the famous Cuirassiers *à la Tête*. Mort, or Death's Heads, and when Gabriel, a fair rose, bound after bound, from simple cuirassier to be Count of the Empire and general of cavalry, his old friend, Casse Tete, had followed him as orderly, till the count commanded the regiment in which he had once done guard duty.

When Gabriel became general he took Casse Tete with him; and after the battle of Wagram, the old soldier had been discharged the service, and was now a sort of factotum, who never

left his master, except to act as dry nurse to the young Count Gabriel, who was exactly one year old on the day Wagram was fought.

So Casse Tete, when he had shuddered, went on, as if to change the subject:

"But I don't wonder your honor remembers the day; for the little count will be two years old to-morrow. Eh, but we gave him a fine salute on his last birthday, my general. Eighty guns at a salvo, and all shot too."

But still the count did not seem to care for the reminiscences. He had not moved on yet, but sat on his horse, slapping his boot with his riding-whip, and when Casse Tete had finished, he resumed:

"These stories, Casse Tete, about The Man in Red. Tell me what you have heard."

Casse Tete hesitated.

"Indeed, my general, they are nothing. These grenadiers are great drinkers. They take Cognac as if it were Bordeaux, and then see all sorts of things. Besides, it was only old Gavroche, and he's the worst liar in the First Regiment."

"And it was old Gavroche told you of this Man in Red?"

"Well, yes, my general. He was one of them; but Jean Marie Buvard, whom the boys call Grenouille [the frog] because he croaks so: he had a story too."

"And what were these stories, Forton?"

Casse Tete stared.

His master had not called him Forton for many a long year, though that was his real name. Hercule Forton had been his appellation on the muster rolls, but every one acquiesced in his nickname of Casse Tete [head-breaker], because it suited his grim, hard hitting nature so well.

Therefore, when Count Gabriel said: "What were these stories, Forton?" the ex-cuirassier knew he was in earnest, so he saluted in the old style and answered:

"Gavroche told me that he was on guard here, in this very place, my general, that is, at the Palace of Fontainebleau, a few days before the coronation, when the emperor came here to pass one night, and that on that night The Man in Red came, just at the last stroke of twelve, passed him without heeding his challenge, and disappeared when Gavroche sent his bayonet through the place where the ghost was, a moment before."

"Is that all?" asked the count, as Casse Tete hesitated.

"No, my general. Gavroche says that the thing vanished in the direction of the emperor's room, and he roused the guard, thinking it some trick of the Jacobins or Royalists. He could not leave his post, but the corporal came running and followed the direction he had given him—"

"And what did he find?"

"Nothing, my general, and that is the queer part of it. Instead of that, comes out the emperor in a towering passion, asking if the Old Guard is on duty, or a lot of green conscripts, that they can't keep madmen out of his very bedchamber. And then he orders the grounds searched, and no one is to be found."

And here Casse Tete stopped uneasily.

"And is that all?" asked the count.

"No, my general. The rest came to Gavroche through Roustan, the Mameluke."

"And what said he?"

"Well, my general, Gavroche knew that, if any knew what passed, it would be the man who always sleeps by the emperor's door; and Roustan will take Cognac as well as any one, though he says his religion forbids him to drink wine. So Gavroche got him to join him in a bottle, and got out of him all he knew."

"And what was that?"

"He said that he was wakened by voices, and found the emperor talking to The Man in Red, who looked like the Old One himself, what Roustan calls Eblis, the Prince of Darkness."

"Did he hear anything?"

"Not much, for just as he woke The Man in Red seemed to have angered the emperor, who caught up his sword and shouted to Roustan to cut the assassin to pieces."

"And Roustan?"

"Jumped up like a regular Mameluke and flew at the man, when out went the lights, and they heard the guards running up. That was all, general."

"And they never found the man?"

"Never, my general. In fact, some say he is no man at all, but the devil."

"Nonsense! There is no such thing."

"Perhaps not, my general. But there is one singular thing about him."

"And what is that?"

"No one has ever seen him but a member of the Guard, and he never comes more than once in a year."

"Is that all you know about him?"

"Not all, my general. Le Grenouille saw him on the night before Austerlitz."

"Indeed! Why, the whole army was in bivouac then."

"For all that he came, when there was not a tent to hide him."

"Tell me how?"

"Willingly, my general. You remember the

field and the fog well enough. He came out of the fog on a sudden, when all the men were asleep, just as the last stroke of twelve sounded from the little church at Pratzen. Le Grenouille didn't see him distinctly, but he heard his voice and saw his shadow by the fire. The emperor was sitting in a camp chair, nodding over the embers, all alone, when The Man in Red stood beside him and said to him: 'Ho! ho! we meet again. I told you we should. You have taken my advice and have prospered.' Then the emperor said something Le Grenouille did not catch, and The Man in Red laughed. 'Ho! ho! as proud as ever. You did it all out of your own brain. But for all that, beware. I am not to be defied forever. You have risen high, but you shall fall low.' And then the emperor called out: 'Sentry, shoot this madman,' and Gavroche fired, so that he roused every one near him. But he says he only heard a laugh, and The Man in Red was gone, no one knew where."

Count Gabriel was puzzled.

"A strange story, Casse Tete. How does this man penetrate the guard?"

"That is not for me to say, my general. There are some say he is the devil, some the ghost of the Duc d'Enghien, who was shot; but all agree in one thing. He never comes to the emperor save on the eve of some great change, and no one has ever seen him who does not belong to the Guard."

Casse Tete seemed to take a certain pride in the specter as appertaining to the Guard, and Count Gabriel rode slowly and in a brown study toward the palace, thinking over all the legends and wondering who could be this mysterious visitor.

That it was a ghost or devil he could not believe; but if it were a man, how could he come and go with such secrecy in the midst of the watchful veterans of the Guard? Thinking over all sorts of explanations, and resolved, if ever he had a chance, to ferret out the mystery, he passed through the village and rode up to the palace, in which he had a fine suit of apartments by virtue of his office, and where his young wife and child were staying.

The rest of the palace was empty, save for a few other pensionaries of the court, such as Baron de Belleville, Grand Forester, a relic of the old regime, Madame la Marquise de St. Jean, ex-Mistress of the Robes to the ex-empress, and one or two others; for the emperor was away at the Tuileries, and his apartments were shut up and deserted.

Count Gabriel was greeted warmly by his pretty black-eyed wife, who held up Gabriel Junior, with the remark:

"See, monsieur, his eyes are more like mine every day, but his hair is the same as that of Captain Blancbec, as they used to call you. It grows whiter every day, I think. Have you heard the news, monsieur?"

"What news, Inez?"

"My faith! that his majesty is not coming to Fontainebleau this summer, where we expected him so much. Madame St. Jean is disconsolate. She had set her heart on asking the new empress to give her a place."

"You don't share her eagerness, ma belle, I hope," he answered gravely.

Her eyes filled with tears, and then she looked spiteful and stamped her foot.

"I! no, no, monsieur. I love the old and I hate the Austrian. It was the Austrian, Marie Antoinette, that brought woe to France, twenty years ago, and this one has come to take away the rights of your poor suffering angel, Josephine. Ah no, monsieur, I shall never ask for a place with her."

Indeed Gabriel and Inez were faithful, in the hour of her sorrow, to the kind and generous mistress who had done so much for both of them, and it was whispered that the emperor liked them none the less for it. They passed from the gardens into their pleasant rooms, while Casse Tete led away the horses, and Gabriel had quietly resigned himself to another of those peaceful evenings that seem so stupid while we enjoy them, but to which we look back afterward as having been so truly happy, when Casse Tete, who had been treating the young count to a ride on his shoulders round the garden, came in, with the child fast asleep in his arms, and said, in his gruff way:

"Beg pardon, my general and madame; but his majesty has just come in."

Gabriel started up instantly and Inez cried: "You are joking, Casse Tete. The emperor?"

Casse Tete stood patiently holding the child. "Indeed no, madame, I could not mistake; for he passed close to me, and I could not give him my proper salute, for fear of waking the young count. And he smiled and said: 'Never mind, Casse Tete. One child like that is worth ten emperors.' Then he rode on to the great doors, and I saw the invalids running out to open for him and let him in."

"Who was with him?" asked Gabriel, and as he spoke he kicked off his slippers and hurriedly began to dress for duty.

"Only Roustan, my general, and his majesty has on his old uniform that he wore at Austerlitz and Wagram. He looked as if he

was thinking of something pleasant; for he smiled as he rode."

Gabriel finished his toilet and said to his wife as he went out:

"You may not see me to-night. His majesty has no escort, and I may have to stand guard for the nonce."

She pouted a little, but submitted.

"I wish he would not take these sudden fancies, or at least let the Governor of Paris know beforehand, so that he might send an escort. But I suppose you must go. A soldier's wife has no rights."

He hurried off to the other end of the huge old-fashioned palace, and met Roustan, who said to him:

"I was coming for you, Monsieur le Comte. His majesty wishes to see you."

Gabriel followed him up the dingy echoing staircase, so deserted now.

The little squad of invalids that had charge of the palace had organized a hasty guard service, and a veteran with a wooden leg was stumping up and down at the foot of the staircase, with his musket as bright as ever.

"Good-evening, monsieur," he said as Gabriel passed. "His majesty has not even brought a cook with him, and we are making a ragout of rabbit, down in the kitchen. I hope he will excuse us, in memory of old times at Marengo."

"I fancy he will, Frappelin. Did he say he was hungry?"

"No, my general, but we know him of old. He used to be careless in Italy, and I have seen the time when he was glad to take half my bread, because he had forgotten to eat all day."

Then Gabriel went up-stairs and found the emperor in his cabinet alone pacing up and down the room and looking thoughtful.

"Ha, count," he cried, stopping, "on time, as of old. Do you remember how you were always ready to do anything except get killed, when I told you? Seriously I have some work for you to-night."

"I know it, your majesty."

"How—you know it?"

"Yes, sire. I was riding home to-day from the forest, when I remembered that this was the Fourth of July."

"Exactly. Yes. So did I. I had forgotten it till I was out on a ride and I said to myself, I will go to Fontainebleau. It may be this braggart will keep his promise and come here again. If so, I will see that he does not escape so easily."

"The very thought that crossed my mind, sire. Shall I take measures to catch him?"

"Do, count. How many men have you?"

"By calling in the forest guards, sire, I can dispose of twenty young, active men, *gendarmes*—not soldiers. If your majesty has not diné—"

"I have not, count. I am famished."

"Then my wife shall attend to your majesty at once."

And Gabriel left the room to attend to his duties, as promised.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN IN RED COMES AGAIN

THE night of the fourth of July, 1810, unlike that of the previous year, was bright and clear, with the full moon in the sky. At the moment the clocks of Paris struck midnight, the moon shone in the zenith, and the stillness was so intense that one in the forest might hear the distant clang.

Not a leaf stirred in the woods, and the hares, rustling among the ferns, passed over the soft, sandy soil, noiselessly as spirits.

In the midst of the forest lies the little village, a mere appanage to the palace, and around the palace, that night, a score of men were lying hidden about in the bushes, under trees, in grottoes, in all sorts of places, watching with loaded carbines to see if any one would come.

As they heard the last faint echo of the clocks in Paris, every man stirred and glared round him into the moonlight, hoping to discover something.

They were Gabriel's *louveters* and the forest guards waiting for The Man in Red, should he come.

Presently one of them called out in a hoarse whisper:

"Do you see anything, Martin?"

"Not I," retorts the man addressed. "If this be the time he comes, he's not coming."

"Hollo! what's that?" cries a third, and as he speaks something gray scuttles across the garden.

The other men laugh.

"Only a rabbit, man."

"Gros Pierre thought it was the ghost."

"Look how pale he is."

And then they are silent and watchful again, for they hear a footstep on the walk which they know well, and presently the Count of Friedland comes by, asking:

"Well, have you seen anything?"

"Nothing, monsieur," is the answer. "If it's a man, he's a deep one. Not a soul has passed this way."

The count went on to the palace, and, as he

entered the open doorway, was challenged by the wooden-legged invalid.

"Ah! it is you, Monsieur le Comte. I thought it might be the ghost."

"Has any thing passed you?"

"Nothing but the air, monsieur."

Gabriel went up-stairs. At the top of the grand staircase he met Casse Tete, who said in a low voice:

"Ah! it is you, my general. That I am glad! I like not this guard duty in these musty old corridors."

"Has any thing passed you?"

"Nothing, my general, but I have heard noises in the wall, and steps pattering all round one. Parbleu, I do not like this at all. One cannot see in this cursed dark hole."

"Pshaw, Casse Tete, only the rats. This is an old palace, remember."

"Rats don't laugh, my general, and I'll swear I heard a laugh a little while ago that might have come from the devil or one of his imps. Feel my hand."

Gabriel found it bathed in sweat, and said in surprise:

"Why, Casse Tete, I believe you are actually afraid of nothing at all."

"I am," was the frank admission. "Give me anything I can see, my general, and I'll face it; but the devil take these dark holes and rats that laugh."

"When did you hear this laugh?" asked the count quickly.

"Not ten minutes ago, my general. I only wish I'd dared strike a light; but it was against the orders."

"Whence came the laugh?"

"From behind me, general."

"Where were you standing?"

"Here, my general: looking down-stairs to catch a glimpse of the moonlight for a bit of company. And when I looked round, there was nothing but the bare wall. I prodded it with my sword, and brought down a lot of plaster."

"Very well. Remain on your post. If you wish now to strike a light, you can smoke a pipe."

Then the count went toward the suit of rooms occupied by the emperor and found them lighted up.

In the ante-room, Roustan, looking as quiet and impassive as ever, sat on a sofa, his legs crossed in the old Egyptian fashion, and smoked sedately at a short chibouque that he was never without.

"Has anything passed, Roustan?" asked the count of the grave Mameluke.

Roustan shook his head.

Then Gabriel went on through two more rooms, till he came to the emperor's own cabinet, where he found the first man in France quietly reading Ossian.

He looked up and smiled:

"Well, count?"

"Nothing has been seen, sire. One of the sentries, to be sure, heard a laugh, but that I suspect to be his imagination."

The emperor tranquilly closed his book.

"He has been here, after all."

"Here, sire? Impossible!"

"So I should have said, had I not seen him with my own eyes. He was here and he came through the very door by which you entered."

"Then there must be secret passages in the thickness of the walls, of which we do not know, sire, and this fellow is acquainted with them."

The emperor shrugged his shoulders.

"After all, it is but a small matter. I have a curiosity to know who he is, on account of his very boldness and skill. I have a mind to set Fouché on him, only—"

"Only what, sire?"

"Only that I fear he is at the bottom of the trick now, in some way," said the emperor, dryly. "He loves to mystify, this Duke of Otranto. I was foolish to come here. I might have known— Never mind. Good-night, count."

And the emperor threw himself back on the sofa on which he was sitting, and closed his eyes with his usual brusque disregard of etiquette.

As for Gabriel, he did not dare to ask what The Red Man had said. Enough for him that he had been there, in spite of all the guards. He was deeply and sincerely mortified at first, and was about to retire, when the emperor opened his eyes and said:

"By-the-by, count, it is not necessary to speak of this to any one."

"No, sire. I have only one consolation."

"And what is that?"

"That I have a clew to this man at last."

The emperor looked interested.

"How? in what way?"

"Your majesty says he came through that doorway?"

"Yes."

"But he did not pass Roustan, who is in the third room from this."

"I see. So he must have entered through the wall of one of them, for they have no side doors."

"But the corridor is on one side, sire. So

there is probably a door hidden in one of those rooms. The laugh which Casse Tete heard in the corridor must have come from him, so that we have found so much about him. He was in the corridor. How came he there? He did not come through the garden or my men would have seen him in the moonlight. He must have entered therefore by an underground passage which opened into the palace."

"Well reasoned, count," said the emperor, smiling. "But I know nothing of such a passage."

"Nor I, sire; but if such a passage exists—and it is more than probable it does—the only people likely to know anything about it would be members of the old court, whose families have lived here since it was built three hundred years ago."

The emperor looked thoughtful.

"You think it is some Chouan, then?"

"I do, sire. It is strange that the soldiers of the Guard say that it is the ghost of the Duke of Enghien."

The emperor's face clouded.

"Who says so?"

"A mere rumor, sire."

"An absurd one, count, most absurd. The Duke of Enghien was a fair, rather stout young man; this is a tall, cadaverous creature, thinner than even your Casse Tete. If I thought some one were playing the fool at my expense, masquerading as the dead duke, I would—"

He broke off, and said, after a pause:

"Besides, I fancy he is only a madman. He does not attempt to harm me, though I have a pair of pistols ready for him if he does. He only vents his spleen in prophecies. What do you suppose he said to-night?"

"I cannot fancy, sire."

The emperor smiled.

"He told me again that he would meet me at Moscow, and warned me that I had only ten years more to live, of which five should be passed in prison."

Gabriel could not help a laugh.

"The man is a wild lunatic, sire; but I will find him out yet, if your majesty gives me leave to try."

"Try and welcome. I may make a duke of you, if you do it soon."

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT STROLL IN PARIS.

THE streets of Paris were all aglitter with lamps, and the trees on the Boulevards were hung with Chinese lanterns, while the crowds that crushed to and fro showed that a public holiday was on foot.

Fireworks were going off, guns booming, bands playing, lemonade men crying their wares, children screaming for their mothers, mothers for their children, lost in the crowd, and over all, in the gardens of the Tuileries, rose up a grand fiery legend, that read:

WAGRAM.

It was the night of the fifth of July, and they were celebrating the anniversary of the battle, which had, for one result, the gift of a new empress to France.

In the midst of the crowd that gazed on the fireworks and moved about among the people, were two tall, shabbily-dressed men, one of whom might have been handsome, but for a black patch over his right eye, while the other was rendered as grim and ugly as it was possible to be, by two huge scars, that seamed his face on each side of the nose, and parted the line of his long white mustache.

They went sidling about among the crowd as if looking for some one, and the scarred man presently whispered:

"There's not a man in the crowd as tall as ourselves, my general. He is not here."

"Don't be impatient," was the answer of the man with the patch over his eye. "It takes time to find out anything in such a crowd. Any time you see a tall man, get near him. I should know the face at once."

"Here's a tall man, here," rejoined Casse Tete. "Standing by the chestnut stall, buying a measure of hot ones. He's tall enough, in all conscience."

They edged through the crowd toward the tall man who was bargaining for the chestnuts, and found, when they got near, that he was a sapper, with a beard like that of a bull buffalo, and a voice of such ponderous base, that Count Gabriel had to smother a laugh as the sapper growled to the timid little chestnut woman:

"Three sous! Gracious heavens! Thousand thunders! Thousand bombshells! It is too much for a half-pint of chestnuts! You are an extortionate old usurer. The Evil One will catch your soul and fr for your avaricious dealing. Do you not reflect that I am a poor soldier that lives on two sous a day, and that you are rolling in riches?"

"Rolling in riches! oh, mon Dieu!" timidly bleated the little chestnut woman, looking up at the huge bulk of the sapper. "Please, monsieur, give me my three sous."

"Here they are, accursed Jewess, blood-sucker of the Boulevards, with thy stockings at home bursting with gold. Here they are."

Think of it! Three sous for such miserable chestnuts, and half-roasted at that!"

Then his sonorous growl was broken by crunching, as he slouched away, leaving the little chestnut woman shoving the disputed three sous down in an old stocking foot that she used for a purse, and murmuring to herself:

"But I made him give it me, old rogue of the rampart! I am no fool, me."

"It is evident, my general," said Casse Tete, dryly, "that the sapper is not a ghost, nor does he look like one."

Gabriel nodded absently. They had come out, as he began to think, on a fool's errand, hunting a needle in a haystack; but he had taken a fancy into his head that he should find the original of The Man in Red somewhere in Paris, and he rightly reasoned that, if such a man existed, he would be likely to hide himself in the largest crowd he could find.

He and Casse Tete, disguised in the oldest and shabbiest clothes they could find, had been wandering about in the throngs all the evening, looking for every head that rose above the crowds of little men of Paris.

Every time they saw a tall man they edged up near him; but only to meet disappointment. Nowhere could Gabriel find the pale face for which he was searching, with its fierce dark eyes and spiky mustache.

So they passed away from the gardens of the Tuileries, out of sight of the legend of Wagram, and wandered out on the Boulevards, where the clink of spoons and glasses was incessant, and where people were sitting out on the sidewalks under the colored lanterns, eating ices and sipping sugared water, in French fashion.

They passed along here rather more quickly, for people looked askance at their shabby clothes, and, even in disguise, one does not like to be sneered at.

When they were approaching the last of these open-air cafes, they began to meet people coming in from the opposite direction, but all were short. Not a giant towered above the crowd. They were all commonplace-looking people, come from seeing the fireworks, to drink sugared water and eat ices.

Yet it was in the midst of this crowd that Count Gabriel encountered some one who knew him, spite of his disguise, one of two short gentlemen who came along arm-in-arm, swinging their canes and chatting.

One of them was a thin dried-up man, with a foxy face and a furtive smile, who looked like a money-lender and who was none other, as Gabriel knew when he set eyes on him, than the dreaded Fouché, Duke of Otranto, and chief of the secret police.

The other man was short and stout, with light curly hair, little side-whiskers, reddish in hue, while his dress was that of a rich provincial farmer, come to Paris for a frolic, in a white coat and top-boots, a broad straw hat and a voluminous white waist-coat.

The only thing that militated against his being a farmer was the fact that his hands were very small and white, and that when he spoke his voice had the indescribable accent of a man who has been well educated.

And it was this individual who, as soon as he met Count Gabriel, ran his arm into that of the young man, and said in a low jesting tone:

"What ails thee, *gros mouchard*? [spy] Thou art open as day and knowest no one. Let us turn and walk back. And Casse Tete, too! Parbleu, my friend. Stick to thy wolves and cuirassiers. Thou wert never meant to ferret out mysteries."

And Gabriel could not help a scarlet flush at the way in which he had been detected; for it was only by his voice and a peculiar pinch of his arm that he had been able to recognize the emperor himself.

Yet he knew that it was a favorite pastime of the first man in Europe to stroll out in the evenings among the people, after the fashion set by Haroun al Raschid in former ages; and it was only because he was looking for a tall man that he had overlooked his master.

The disguised emperor wheeled him round and they resumed their march in the direction from which Gabriel had just come. Casse Tete had fallen behind and the sly Fouché was strolling by his side in the stream of promenaders, when some one called out from a table:

"Hola! Auguste! The two ragamuffins have found their lambs at last. Go back to thy pasture, fat sheep of the country, or the long wolf will pick thy bones."

The emperor shook with suppressed but hearty laughter as he walked on.

"Do you know, my dear count, what we are taken for?" he whispered presently. "They imagine you are the decoy of some gambling house, and that I am the victim. See what a difference there is in men. I tell you, count, you are not fit to find out mysteries. Your figure cannot be hidden; and as for Casse Tete, he looks too like Don Quixote de la Mancha to be sent out on such an expedition. See, yonder. Here comes a gendarme. He will look on you as a suspicious character. I really shall have to leave you, I fear."

And just at that moment the gendarme who approached them halted, looked at Gabriel in

his sternest way, and then tapped him on the shoulder, saying:

"Hold, young man. Thy way is not here. This honest gentleman does not know into what hands he is falling."

Gabriel, confused, did not know what to say, and the emperor, addressing the officer in the most innocent way, said:

"Excuse me, Monsieur the General—"

"I am no general, countryman," was the stiff interruption. "I am a gendarme."

"Pardon me," returned the seeming innocent, blandly. "I thought from that gorgeous uniform and cocked hat that you must be a colonel at least. But this gentleman is a friend of mine—that is, he has offered to show me the sights of Paris."

"Exactly," replied the gendarme, softly. "Well, I've warned thee. Go on and lose thy purse if thou wilt."

And he pursued his way, evidently sulky, while the emperor went on, chuckling to himself and whispering:

"Oh, my dear count, what readers of the face are these dogs of the law. They saw the innocent shining from every curl of my wig and the rascality that even that black patch cannot hide in thy left eye."

And as they passed the tables as before they were exposed to a running fire of true Parisian wit and sarcasm, to which none of the four could make any reply without betraying themselves, till they came to the garden of the Tuileries again, and plunged into the crowd to be lost to notice.

Here Fouché sidled up to his master and said, in a low voice of irritation:

"For Heaven's sake, sire, let us go as we were before. We attract notice from the contrast in our stature. There are three of my men have been watching us as suspicious characters for some minutes, and I don't want to tell them who I am."

"On the contrary, my dear Fouché," retorted the disguised emperor, who seemed to be in a perverse and frolicsome humor that night, as he sometimes took a whim to be, "on the contrary, it is as well that your men should watch us. It is seldom in these days that I find an opportunity of testing honest public opinion. Now I'll wager they take me for a countryman and you three for three sharpers combining to pluck my feathers. You are the only man of the party not disguised, and if they do not recognize you, it is their own fault."

The emperor, while he valued Fouché for his astuteness, delighted in making jokes on his character, which was, in brief, that of a consummate rascal and speculator.

"Let us go on," pursued the emperor. "I came out to-night for a purpose, and I am not to be balked of it. I want to find what the people are saying about all of us."

He dragged Gabriel along till they came in front of the great transparency, and then remarked, loud enough to be heard:

"Wagram! Bah! Not much of a battle!"

"Not much of a battle, sayest thou?" cried an excited voice behind him. "What dost thou know of it, mutton-head? Perhaps thou wast there? Not much of a battle indeed. I tell thee such cattle as these had better keep out of places like that. Not much of a battle! When it was fought by our glorious emperor! Where will you find such a general in Europe? Where?"

They had run on the big sapper, who was full of excitement and Cognac, to judge from his breath, as he held his face close.

"Where?" responded the disguised emperor coolly. "Why, Moreau for example."

The big sapper jumped up and down with a roar of rage, vociferating:

"Moreau is a cursed traitor, a royalist, a Jacobin, a Chouan! Do you hear? I'll fight any man in Paris that denies that the Emperor Napoleon is the greatest soldier on the earth. Dost thou hear?"

"Vive l'Empereur!" bellowed another soldier in the crowd, and in a moment the whole assembly caught up the cry, not knowing why, and the big sapper shook his fist in Gabriel's face, bellowing:

"Shout Vive l'Empereur! I believe thou art a Chouan spy, with thy black patch. Shout or die!"

And the big sapper pulled out the short sword by his side.

CHAPTER V.

THE FAUBOURG ST. ANTOINE.

A ROW was imminent, and a real French row, in which every one takes part, not exactly knowing what it is about.

People began to shout the most opposite accusations at the man with the light wig and him with the black patch, while Fouché and Casse Tete were unnoticed.

"Royalists!"

"Red Republicans!"

"Chouans!"

"Mountaineers!"

"English spies!"

"Put them under the fountain!"

And in the midst of the yells Casse Tete suddenly put his knee into the back of the big sapper, and flung him like a log to the earth,

when blows began to fall freely on all sides, and some one raised the cry:

"Gendarmes coming!"

In a moment the crowd began to run, fighting a little as they went, and Count Gabriel and the disguised emperor, considerably hustled but unhurt, found themselves running with the rest, down a narrow street that led into the dingy old Faubourg St. Antoine, with the roar of the mob growing less and less behind them, while Casse Tete and Fouché had been lost in the crowd.

How they had got there and by what street they had come they did not exactly know, on account of the confusion and fighting; but they heard the clank of cuirassiers, and knew that the Municipal Guard was coming, so, without more ado, Gabriel and the disguised emperor plunged into the devious lanes and alleys of the once famous Faubourg, till they found themselves alone in a blind alley, without a sound to break the stillness, under a dingy oil lamp, swung from chains at the middle of the gutter.

Gabriel looked at the emperor. His light wig was awry, his hat battered, his coat torn open at one outside pocket, but he was laughing heartily.

"Parbleu, count," he said. "These fellows are rough in their loyalty. It is the first time I have ever had to run in my own capital. And yet I only said Wagram was not much of a battle."

"Your majesty sees it is not safe in Paris to depreciate the victories of the Emperor Napoleon," said Gabriel, smiling. "If I may advise, I would recommend your majesty to be more guarded in language, when taking a stroll in future."

The emperor laughed and then looked round him curiously, observing:

"Parbleu, count, do you know where we are now?"

"I have not the least idea, sire, except that it is in the Faubourg St. Antoine. The smell in the gutters tells that."

"The Faubourg St. Antoine," repeated the emperor, thoughtfully. "Ah, count, you were only a child when this Faubourg gave laws to France. It was from these vile-smelling alleys that the mob rushed out in the Reign of Terror, with their red caps and pikes. It was under that very lantern that they hung some poor man, perhaps, whose only crime was that he had a 'De' before his name. Ah, the miscreants! But I gave them their medicine at the Revolt of the Sections. Yes, yes. You were only nine years old then. And who would have thought, in those days of license, that the Emperor of the French would one day be standing alone in the heart of this same Faubourg, without a red cap in Paris. Come, let us go. Let us explore this place. I am in the humor for adventures to-night. I have not seen the real people since the Pope came to Paris to oil my hair for me."

He ended with his usual mocking smile, as he referred to his coronation, and they walked slowly out of the alley into a narrow street.

At the corner, under the dingy lamp, they read the sign *Allee des Sans Culottes*.

"The last remnant of what was once a power in France," commented the emperor, "but I must remember to have that name changed to-morrow. What is the street?"

A winding, narrow, ill-smelling place, with a gutter in the middle, and huge cobble-stones on each side, yet it had a high sounding name:—"Rue de la Cruche d'Or." [Golden Pitcher Street.]

The emperor gave a short, sarcastic laugh, as he observed:

"Paris is the city of contrasts, count. The street of the Golden Pitcher ends in the Alley of the Breechless. I know where we are now. You would not believe it, but positively I once lodged in this street."

"You, sire! Impossible!"

"Yes; I and Junot. Eh, but we had not much money in those days, and when Junot had a remittance from his father at Avignon, he always divided with me. We used to go to bed in the daytime, now and then, to sleep off the pangs of hunger, when supplies were short."

"You must have been unhappy, sire, in those days before your genius was known, and—"

"Unhappy? Who knows? Yes; I thought so then, count, and yet, sometimes I think now those days were not so unhappy, after all. I knew whom I could trust, then."

And the first man in Europe had fallen into a brown study, as he walked slowly on, his head bent, his hands behind him. Even his disguise could not hide the characteristic attitude of thought.

They went on down the street, till the emperor said indifferently:

"There is the old house, count. It used to be kept by Citoyenne Tripotte. I wonder who lives there now, and whether our old rooms are occupied."

He did not seem to care much. It was a mere passing spasm of curiosity, roused by old associations; but Gabriel, whose romantic imagination was excited by anything that told of the

past of his chief, looked closely at the house and saw a large silver plate on the door. So he said:

"There is some professional person lives there now, sire. There is a sign up."

The emperor wheeled round and looked at the house more attentively.

"So there seems to be," he remarked. "Go and read the sign, count."

Gabriel went up and read aloud:—

"**MADemoiselle CAMILLE LENORMAND,**
Seventh daughter of the famous Astrologer,
REVEALS THE FUTURE AND PAST.

TERMS, TEN FRANCS A SITTING."

The emperor burst out laughing. He was just in the humor that night to seek any adventure, however ridiculous.

"Ten Francs a sitting! The prophetess is dirt cheap. Who could refuse such an offer? To reveal the past, and the future, and all for ten francs! Count, let us try this wonderful lady. I wish to ask her of the famous astrologer, whose daughter she is. On my word I never heard of him. Such is fame. Come on."

He was going up to the door, when Gabriel ventured to say respectfully:

"But, sire, reflect. Your face is too well known to all Paris to be hidden, and though your wig is sufficient disguise out in the dark streets, this fortune-teller will certainly recognize you."

The emperor settled his wig and false whiskers, cocked his hat on one side and turned to Gabriel, who noticed with surprise that he had changed the whole expression of his countenance by drawing down one side of his mouth and putting a patch of black plaster at one side of his nose. He spoke, too, in a thick voice, and used a rustic *patois* from the south of France.

"How is that, my good one?" he asked. "If I had not chosen, you should never have known me on the Boulevard. Talma taught me how to change my face. I am going in here."

And without more ado the emperor lifted the knocker, and sent a thundering peal echoing through a dark silent house in the Rue Cruche d'Or.

For some moments all was silent, and then a voice came out of the middle of the door, and they saw a little wicket, like that on the portal of a Masonic Lodge:

"Who comes?" asked the voice.

"Strangers, who wish to see the lady who tells fortunes," answered Gabriel at a sign from the emperor.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ASTROLOGER'S DAUGHTER.

"WAIT," said the voice from the hole in the door. "The hour is late. I must ask."

Then they heard the click of the closing wicket and found themselves alone in the street, where Gabriel ventured to say:

"Sire, it will be all over Paris to-morrow if you are recognized."

The emperor stamped his foot angrily.

"A truce to preaching, young man. I have taken a fancy to see if Fouché does his duty with these impostors. Remember, I am Jean Baptiste Bonhomme, from Tarascon. You are Lenoir, of Alsace. I wonder how much longer this detestable woman will keep us waiting."

Gabriel lifted his hand to the knocker and the emperor nodded.

"Yes. Wake her up again. Morbleu! is not our money as good as that of the other idiots in Paris?"

Gabriel knocked, and they soon heard a step coming to the door. Then the little wicket opened, and the voice said:

"Patience. The lady is consulting the stars. Have you the money ready?"

"Yes! Tete Dieu, yes!" said the emperor, in an irritable tone.

"Pass it in at the wicket, then," said the voice, and the first man in Europe thrust in a gold piece at the little hole.

"There is twenty francs, for two. Now open the door, or I'll call the police."

Whether the Napoleon or the menace prevailed is uncertain, but the door was opened, and they entered a low, dark passage, lighted by a single tallow candle, and saw before them a short, humpbacked negro, in a rich Oriental dress, who said:

"The prophetess will receive you. Please to advance."

Then he shut the door and followed them down the passage to a flight of stairs, when the emperor asked:

"And on which floor does the lady live?"

"We have the whole house," proudly replied the negro. "The priestess of the stars brooks no company in the house of magic spells."

"Morbleu!" muttered the emperor. "It must be a profitable business, telling the fortunes of others. Better than making sugar of beet-roots, eh, Lenoir?"

Gabriel answered in the same vein, with a broad Alsatian accent:

"Ay, ay, Pere Baptiste. But the devil pays good wages, they say."

"The devil has nothing to do with it," cried the negro, angrily. "My mistress reads the stars according to the sublime rules of astrology. Be pleased to ascend. You will find her in the Divining Room."

He preceded them now, puffing and swelling with importance, and climbed stair after stair till they arrived under a skylight, when he said in a low voice, as if full of awe:

"Hush! Not a word. We are approaching the Divining Room."

He pushed aside some curtains that hid a doorway, and ushered them into a darkish room covered with a skylight, through which the stars shone down, while the moon, hidden behind some neighboring roofs, was just peeping over the edge and sending a white shaft of light into one corner.

By the faint light they could see that the room had an Oriental cushioned divan running round it, and that its only furniture was a huge celestial globe of blue, semi-transparent glass, that was lighted up inside and showed a perfect miniature of the starry sky. This globe rested on a massive bronze tripod, beneath the feet of which lay a huge open book, inscribed with phosphoric characters on a black page.

The emperor took in all the details with a single glance, and noticed that the walls of the room were hung with curtains all round, so that one could not tell where the door was, without feeling for it.

The black slave had disappeared, and they were alone in the dead silence of this curtained room.

Gabriel was about to speak, when he was checked by a pressure of the arm, and saw the emperor lay his finger on his lips, as a sign for silence.

So, for some minutes, they remained standing, looking at the globe, till they heard the sound of soft music, as if playing at a great distance; but slowly drawing nearer.

Gabriel looked at his master, and saw his lip curl in a contemptuous smile. The emperor was not impressed by solemn mummeries of that sort.

Nevertheless, the music was very sweet and sad and almost brought the tears to the eyes of the young man, as it died away into the faintest of strains.

Then, of a sudden, a voice spoke, right behind them, and they both started.

"Whom seek ye?" said the voice.

They wheeled round and beheld almost touching them, a tall, dark woman, with flowing braids of black hair, and great dark eyes. She was dressed in long, black robes, spangled with shining points like stars, and looked at them in a solemn, commanding way, that would have impressed most people.

"Whom seek ye?" she repeated, in the same deep, rich tones as before.

"I am seeking the lady who has six sisters," responded the disguised emperor, brusquely.

"What has become of them all, madame?"

She frowned on him as she answered:

"What is that to thee? Ask of thyself. This is not the first time these walls have seen thee. Many a time and oft have thy feet climbed these steps."

Gabriel could not help thinking:

"I knew it. She has pierced his disguise. They must know he once lodged here."

The emperor, far from being disconcerted, replied, with his Marseillais accent:

"Tete Dieu, ma belle, thou hast made a little mistake. I am Jean Baptiste Bonhomme of Tarascon, and I came here to know if thou canst tell me what has become of the white calf that some one stole, only two weeks ago last Wednesday."

The fortune-teller looked at him with a smile of some scorn, and said:

"Jean Baptiste Bonhomme, thy calf was not stolen. The stars never lie, and they have told me that you once lodged in this house."

She turned away to Gabriel.

"What dost thou wish to know?"

Gabriel hesitated.

"I? Nothing—"

"Then I will tell thee something," she quickly retorted. "Thou hast been a soldier, and there is blood on thy hands. Thou seekest what thou shalt never find, and it is well for thee it is so."

"Parbleu, Mademoiselle Lenormand, you speak in riddles," observed the emperor, in his most sarcastic tones. "And who, if I may ask, was the famous astrologer, your father, of whom you are so proud?"

"Fame is comparative," answered she in a frigid tone. "Those who knew him, knew a wonder. Dream, if thou wilt, that all the world knows thee: the day shall come when thy name shall be coupled only with that of Attila."

The emperor frowned deeply. Gabriel could see his face now, for the moonlight had filled the room.

"One word, mademoiselle," he said hoarsely. "Do you know me?"

She smiled more courteously.

"Your majesty needs a better disguise than that, to hide the grandest head in Europe."

The emperor dashed off his wig petulantly.

"To the devil with Talma and his rules of art. You have sharp eyes. Now tell me if you can, who is this? None of your mummery with me. If you know who I am, you know that I am not to be trifled with. Who is this with me?"

The fortune-teller looked at Gabriel and answered instantly:

"Count Gabriel of Friedland, Grand Louvetier of the empire. I have seen him many a time, but without that patch over his eye and in better clothes."

The emperor laughed. He had recovered his good-humor, and cried out:

"She has thee fairly, count. I knew that there was no disguising that tall figure of thine, and the Grand Louvetier is a public character."

"And now," said the fortune-teller, "since your majesty has condescended to reveal yourself, it is for me to reveal my powers. You came here in scorn, thinking to find an impostor. Your majesty shall see that I know both past and future."

"Eh, parbleu! that is easy enough with me," returned the emperor good-naturedly, "when half the fools in France have been writing my biographies, and questioning my old nurse to find out how many times I over-eat myself as a child. Tell me something about this gentleman. That will be a test."

The fortune-teller looked at Gabriel steadily, and her dark eyes shone strangely.

"I see him as a boy," she said slowly, "alone on a battle-field among dead men. He is trying to raise a body. It is that of his father, for the likeness tells it, and there are six bullet-holes in the breast. I see the boy kneel down and raise his hands to heaven, as if praying. He is swearing to avenge his father. I see him again, a grown man. He rides a black horse and wears armor. He leads a long line of men in black armor, on black horses. They are all dark men. He is the only fair man in the line. They are riding over dead bodies in the Prussian uniform. He has avenged his father. That is past."

"All that is nothing," remarked the emperor. "Give me a better test. The Death's Heads are known over Europe."

The prophetess turned on him with flashing eyes and cried out:

"You wish a test. Shall I tell you who it was that came to you last night?"

Eagerly the emperor replied:

"Ay, tell me what he said, and I will think there is something in you."

Her voice sunk to a low, thrilling key:

"He told you that the child you look for, on whom you build such hopes, would never sit on the throne of France, and that the second Napoleon should be the descendant of Josephine, whom you cast off."

Even the iron nerves of the emperor were shaken by this avowal, but he asked her:

"And did he say no more? Did he tell who he was?"

"He did not, but I can."

"And who was he?" asked the emperor, with a slight sneer.

"One who studied with you at Brienne, and of whose fame you were jealous, as of Moreau's."

The emperor's brow grew black as night.

"Fool," he retorted, "what man ever lived in France of whom I was jealous?"

"One," answered the woman, boldly, "one besides Moreau. He died in prison, by his own hand says the *Moniteur*, by Fouché's police say others. But his spirit lives, and will haunt thee till the lilies wave over France again and the ocean waves roll by the grave of Napoleon the Usurper."

Then the emperor laughed aloud.

"You have said it at last. I see who you are now—a Bourbon spy. If you know who he is, you are in league with him. Come, count, we have wasted time on an impostor. Fouché can deal with her. It is not worth my while to soil my hands."

And he quitted the room abruptly.

CHAPTER VII.

CASSE TETE'S ADVENTURE.

GABRIEL half expected to hear the seeress say something to prevent their departure, but she made no opposition, and they descended the stairs and went out into the street, where the disguised emperor at once struck off, at a fast walk, toward the Tuileries.

He said nothing on the way till he got to the open and crowded streets. Then he turned on his companion, and said, in a harsh, dry tone of voice:

"Well, did you hear who she said he was, this fellow that troubles us so?"

"I did not understand, sire."

"She said it was a man who died in prison, by his own hand, according to the *Moniteur*."

"Yes, sire, and that other people blamed the Duke of Otranto's police."

"Then you must know whom she meant."

"I, sire? No. Your majesty forgets that, as a soldier, I take no interest in politics or police."

The emperor looked at him suspiciously.

"You are sure you do not know?"

"Certain, sire. But one thing is plain. If she be right, the man did not die. We have no ghosts nowadays."

The emperor nodded.

"That is true. You are a sensible man, and see far, count. Come along."

They went on to the Tuileries Gardens, which they found peaceful again, and they hurried in at a lower door, where a sentry challenged them and seemed to be overwhelmed with surprise when he found that it was the emperor himself, who went at once to his cabinet, still followed by Count Gabriel, who did not dare to leave him.

The emperor rung a bell, and said to the chamberlain who entered:

"Send for the chief of police. Tell him to go to No. 753 Rue de la Cruche d'Or, and arrest every one in the house, seal up everything, seize the papers and make all secure. Then let him report to me what he finds."

The chamberlain—a grave, quiet person whom Gabriel knew as Monsieur de Remusat, bowed and vanished.

Then the emperor turned to Gabriel.

"Thanks for your company to-night, count. We have had a pleasant trip. You will wish to return to Fontainebleau, I presume. I relieve you from further duty on this matter. I know now who the man is. Good-night."

He had resumed all the freezing haughtiness of demeanor with which he knew so well how to atone for the frankness and familiarity he exercised at times, when the mood was on him, and dismissed Gabriel so curtly that the latter feared he had offended him.

So he left the palace, mortified, he hardly knew why, went to his town house, changed his clothes, and drove back to Fontainebleau, and found Casse Tete waiting for him.

"Why, where did you get to in the crowd, Casse Tete?" asked his master. "I missed you there and found you here. Why did you not stay in Paris?"

Casse Tete pulled his mustache in a manner that denoted embarrassment.

"Please, your honor, I thought that the stupid citizens could not hurt a man like your honor, and I did not know where to look for your honor, and so I thought that as your honor must surely come home some time, the quickest way to find your honor was to wait for your honor at your honor's own house."

Gabriel smiled.

"Casse Tete, you are lying to me. You old rascal, the Death's Heads never called their colonel 'your honor' seven times in a minute."

Casse Tete turned red and stammered:

"The fact is, my general, I had a little adventure."

"An adventure? With whom?"

"With a lady, my general, of course. A French soldier does not count anything an adventure except an assignation of love or the sword."

Gabriel stared at him, and then burst out laughing. He could not help it.

"A lady? You?"

Casse Tete bridled up.

"Certainly, my general. I am not too old yet, even if my hair is a little gray. My father had gray hair at twenty-two. It is true I have some scars, but the ladies do not object to them in the least."

Count Gabriel could not contain himself from laughing at the idea of such a grim old figure-head as Casse Tete in a sentimental adventure with a lady, but he made shift to ask gravely:

"This adventure, Casse Tete, and what was it? How came it?"

"Well, my general, you remember we were parted by that little fuss in the Garden of the Tuileries, and the Municipal Guards came down on us, so that I was carried away by the rush, but not before I managed to give that big sapper a kick on the side of the head that will stop him from fighting awhile. When I got out of the crowd I found that I was in the middle of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and right opposite a house where there was the sign up, that people had their fortunes told there."

Gabriel started in surprise.

"Not Mademoiselle Lenormand, 753 Rue de la Cruche d'Or?"

Casse Tete shook his head.

"Oh, no, my general. All Paris knows her, but she's too high-priced for a poor devil like me. No. This was a twenty sou fortune-teller, Madame Etoile."

"Well, and what came of this?"

"Well, my general, it seemed to me as if the finger of Providence must be in it; for we had been searching all over Paris for a man who was playing the devil, and here I was right opposite a fortune-teller. It said on the sign: 'Lost and stolen articles recovered.' So I thought, 'I will go in to Madame Etoile and find out who this fellow was, and how he got into the emperor's palaces so easily.'"

"So that Madame Etoile was your lady?"

"No, no, my general. Madame Etoile is an old woman with a beard, as ugly as sin, according to what I've heard, for I never saw her."

"Then what was your adventure?"

"I am coming to it, my general. As I said, I was going up to the door, when I saw two people coming down the street, a man and a woman. The woman was hurrying along, the man following her, and she looked frightened. I was in the shadow of a house and watched them, when the man came up with the woman, just in front of Madame Etoile's door. He caught hold of her arm and she gave a scream, when of course I rushed in, and gave my gentleman a kick in the stomach that doubled him up. And then I saw in the moonlight that he was one of the secret police, for, as his coat flew open, I saw his badge of office."

"Indeed? And what did you do then?"

"Well, my general, I knew I'd be in a bad scrape if he recognized me; for I thought it must be an arrest, and I was bound he should not recognize me. So I just gave him another kick, this time at the back of the head, that put him to sleep, and then I said to the woman, 'He won't trouble you any more, my dear. Will you let me see you home?'"

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing, my general, at first. She was just half dead with fear; but, after a bit, she told me how grateful she was, and asked me if I knew the way to Fontainebleau; and, parbleu, my general, who do you think it was?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Casse Tete."

"It was little Fanchette, Madame de St. Jean's maid. I didn't know her at first, for she was dressed like a lady; but she knew me. And the end of it was that I took her home, my general."

"Did you ask her how she came to have the police after her?"

"Yes, my general; and she cried so over it that I hadn't the heart to persist. She wouldn't tell me, but I'll end in getting it out of her; for we are on the best terms."

And Casse Tete looked very knowing.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BARON'S GOSSIP.

COUNT GABRIEL of Friedland slept ill that night, and felt a vague sense of uneasiness the next morning when he went out into the forest to attend to his honorary duties.

This troublesome apparition of The Man in Red annoyed him excessively, now that the emperor had peremptorily dismissed him from further efforts in the case.

It was clear to his mind that Casse Tete had stumbled on a discovery that had some connection with the mystery.

If The Man in Red were not supernatural—and his education forbid him to think that—he must be a person well acquainted with the ins and outs of the French palaces, and the customs of service in the army.

He had never made his appearance save in a French palace, or in the camp of the Old Guard; and in either case his presence argued confederates.

The Royalist plots that had agitated France at the period of the Consulate were supposed to have died away since the accession of the emperor, but Gabriel knew that, even among the high officers of the empire, there was more than one that secretly held the extreme opinions of the legitimists, and among the old ladies of the ancient nobility Royalism was openly talked.

Madame de St. Jean, his neighbor in the palace, he knew to be a Legitimist of the old kind, who had given up her opinions for a place under Josephine, and taken them again on her dismissal, when Marie Louise became empress.

Madame de St. Jean had been his own enemy before his marriage, and had tried to get his wife away from him, to be married to the Prussian prince of Potsdam, whom he had killed in a duel at last.

And here was Madame de St. Jean's maid, a girl of twenty, leaving Fontainebleau secretly in the night, and found in Paris, in the hands of the secret police, not forty-eight hours after the mysterious visit of The Man in Red.

Count Gabriel thought over all these things, and felt irritated that he could not penetrate any deeper, now that the key of the mystery was in his hands.

But the emperor had told him that he knew who the man was, and that he had discharged him from further consideration of the matter, so that he could do no more.

He left Casse Tete behind that morning and rode alone into the forest, mile after mile, through the grand old trees that had come down from the days of Charlemagne, the bridle loose, his horse following the road mechanically—his master buried in thought.

He had forgotten all about where he was going, when he saw some one coming on the road ahead of him, and recognized the portly figure of the Baron de Belleville, Grand Forester at Fontainebleau.

The baron rode a sedate old mare of the same build as her master, and equally averse to rapid movement, and the baron wore the costume of Louis XIV., wig and all. He was one of the

old noblesse who had taken office under the emperor with all the readiness of a born courtier; and, if he held Legitimist opinions, kept them within his own bosom.

"Good-morning, Monsieur le Comte," he cried, courteously, as they met. "We missed you last night at Madame St. Jean's. We were reduced to playing piquet, for your amiable countess absolutely refused to engage in whist with a dummy, and for my part I don't wonder. It spoils the game."

In the retirement of the chateau the few inmates had been driven to whist parties as a relaxation when the court was away.

"Did you play late?" asked Gabriel.

"Late! No. We parted at midnight. By-the-by, now I recall it, the marquise was in rather a bad humor last night, between ourselves, you know."

"Indeed? And what about?"

"Ah! that is her affair. I was not sorry, for it was fifteen francs in my pocket, she played so badly and kept looking at the clock in a manner, I declare, the reverse of complimentary to myself."

Gabriel began to feel interested in the secret and forgot all about prudence in curiosity.

"Then you think she wished to get rid of you, baron?"

"On my word I thought so at first, and were the marquise twenty years younger, I should have suspected an intrigue. But it is very singular, my friend, as soon as I offered to go, she pressed me to stay, and I can tell when a woman is in earnest, too."

"When did you leave her, then?"

"About midnight, as I said before, when her little maid, Fanchette— Ah, by-the-by, count, there is a rosy little mortal, enough to tempt even an old fellow like me. Eh, count?"

"But what about Fanchette, baron?"

"Oh, Fanchette came in, and, on my word, madame started as if she had seen a ghost, so that I was surprised. But she recovered herself immediately and gave the girl some trifling order, which took her out of the room. And then she became so obviously abstracted that I took my leave in very pity. And I have been puzzling my old brains, count, ever since to know why the entrance of that girl made her start so violently."

"Did you see the girl early in the evening, baron?" asked Count Gabriel.

"Yes, no—come to think of it, no. I missed her once; but of course one cannot ask about a pretty servant without having one's motives called in question, and the marquise, as you are aware, is not the woman to suffer rivalry."

The ancient Lothario winked at the young man in a knowing way.

"What time did she come in?" pursued Gabriel thoughtfully.

"It was five minutes past twelve, by the clock on the mantle-piece."

"Did the girl look as usual, quiet and neat, baron?"

"No, she seemed to me as if she had been frightened and crying, for she was very pale."

"I suppose that was what startled the marquise. I believe she is quite fond of her little maid, baron. Probably she thought she was sick. Well, have you been your rounds?"

"Yes, I'm going home. What do you think of it all, count?"

"Of what, baron?"

"Of last night. Do you think—can it be possible that—"

"That what, baron?"

"That the marquise is carrying on an intrigue with some one—"

"Of what kind?"

"Why of course a woman can only have one kind of intrigue, with a man in it."

Gabriel laughed.

"Reassure yourself, my friend. Madame la Marquise may have had her youthful follies; but she is past all that now. Any intrigue in which she engages hereafter will be political, or to take away the character of some other woman."

The baron pricked up his ears.

"What! politics? But no, she cannot be such a fool. My faith, these are not the safe times for politics. This devil of a man in the Tuileries will not stand any nonsense."

"You'd better tell her so, baron."

"No, no, my dear friend. Not such a fool. But there is one thing I can do."

"And that is?"

"To find out what the marquise had at the bottom of her heart, hid away. If it be politics, I am not sure but what I might be tempted to give her a fright, by telling her I know all about it."

"The best thing you can do, baron. Good-day to you. I must make my rounds."

They parted; and, as Gabriel rode along, he could not help thinking:

"If the baron finds out anything, it is not my fault, and I cannot be blamed for it; but on my word, I would like to know myself what took Fanchette to Paris last night."

He made his rounds, returned to the palace, and found the very Fanchette of whom he had been thinking, waiting for him, with a note from Madame de St. Jean.

CHAPTER IX.

MADAME LA MARQUISE.

FANCHETTE was, as has already been hinted, a remarkably pretty girl, and her Normandy peasant costume, with its quaint cap, did not make her any uglier. She looked the picture of demure innocence, and kept her eyes on the floor with the aspect of a nun.

Gabriel looked at her sharply, as he opened the note; but if she had any tremors she hid them under her modest, downcast look, and he read the message:

"Madame la Marquise de St. Jean desires the pleasure of an interview with Monsieur le Comte de Friedland, on business of importance."

"Tell madame I will come," he said, dryly; and then, as she was turning away, he added, in a tone of meaning:

"Another time, when you go to Paris, be careful to come home before dark."

She made no answer, but hurried out with her head down, and he went to tell his wife that madame had asked him to pay her a visit on business.

"Strange that she should ask to see me, when she knows I hate her like poison, or a snake, or anything treacherous," he added to Inez.

She patted his arm soothingly.

"Never mind the past, *mon cher*. I have a fancy that poor madame is in trouble, and when an enemy is in trouble, you know, we should forgive and help him."

"That is hardly the soldier's creed," he replied, laughing. "After a victory is the time we let loose the cuirassiers and gather in the guns and prisoners. But you think she is in trouble? Of what kind? Debts?"

"I think so."

"Then I cannot help her," said he, decidedly.

"At least do not be rude to her, *mon cher*. Remember she is old enough to be your mother. Respect her age."

"I will try to," he answered; "but when I think of the trouble she gave us, only three years ago, I feel inclined to tell her to go to the deuce."

But for all that he went straight to the rooms of the old marquise, at the other end of the palace, and found her alone in her boudoir, looking pale and haggard through her rouge.

He bowed rather coldly, saying:

"I have obeyed your wishes, madame."

"You were always kind and generous," she said, in a low, husky voice. "Oh, monsieur, I know that you once had reason to hate me; but possibly you may have judged even me too harshly. But I do not, I cannot complain. You have been kind and generous to me."

"The past is past, madame. I have obeyed your wishes. 'You desire to ask of me—'"

"To ask of you forgiveness, mercy," she exclaimed, clasping her hands. "You have in your power a secret that may be the means of consigning me to the dungeon or the pestilential swamps of Cayenne. You cannot be ignorant of it, after last night. My life is in your power."

"Do I look like a man who makes war on women, madame?"

"No, no. I knew you were kind and noble; too noble for me. But it is not only mercy that I ask, but help and protection."

"Protection from what, madame?"

"From that detestable Jacobin, Fouché, with his low manners and his spies, who delights in nothing so much as treading us down into the mire; us of the old noblesse, because we despise him."

"And how have you incurred the hatred of the Minister of Police, madame? You may be aware that as an officer of the empire, I cannot neglect my duty and try to put obstacles in the way of the police. I suppose, from what you say, that you have been dabbling in silly political plots. If so, you must take the consequences."

She burst out into a low cry, and he could not help a feeling of pity for this old woman, in her abject terror.

"No, no," she moaned. "It is not that, not that. They would not hurt me, I think; for the Empress Josephine has some influence left. It is not that."

"Then what is it, madame?"

"There is another—oh, count, count, I am about to confide in you—to confide in you a secret which places me wholly in your power—I—I—it is my—"

"Spare yourself the pain of the avowal, madame. I do not wish to know your family secrets, or to have you in my power. In a word, what do you require of me?"

"You know that Fanchette was nearly arrested last night. I am not certain yet if the police recognized her. Find out for me if they did, and let me know. If so, I must flee from France in twelve hours."

She spoke rapidly and distinctly now that she had found him willing to listen, and he could see, from the eager look in her eyes, that she was intensely anxious.

"I am pretty sure, from what Casse Tete told me, that they did recognize her, or they would not have chased her," he replied. "If you will tell me what caused the chase, I will tell you whether they knew her."

The marquise hesitated and eyed him furtively for some seconds, before she finally said, slowly:

"She had taken a message from me to a person in whom I take a deep interest—in fact, a relative—very near—"

Then she stopped short. He waited patiently till she resumed:

"My friend—my relative—is on the side of the king, and therefore, as you are aware, in constant danger from the police. Fanchette arrived there, and delivered my message, when a terrible knocking came at the door. They all knew what it was, and escaped the back way, but found the house surrounded by the police, of whom two were in the rear. One of these chased her—"

"What became of the other, madame?"

"I do not know—yet—but I fancy—"

"Fancy what, madame?"

"That he was killed by my friend."

"Indeed? Then in that case I can reassure you, madame. The police did not know your domestic, for the man who caught her was stunned by Casse Tete before he could see her face."

The marquise looked relieved.

"You are quite sure of that? You are not deceiving me with false hopes, to end in my arrest to-morrow?"

"Certainly not, madame. Unless your friend was arrested."

The old woman tossed her head proudly.

"Arrested! He! No, no, count. The police are not yet appointed that can catch him, if he is not betrayed by a traitor."

"Then what is it you fear, madame?"

"That Fanchette might be arrested. She is a coward, like all girls, and they would wring everything out of her."

"Then make your mind easy, madame, for, thanks to Casse Tete's rough method of treatment, the police are not likely to have any clew to Fanchette's identity. And now, madame, let me give you a piece of advice. Keep out of these silly Royalist plots. The French people have a man on the throne now, a warrior, the greatest man in the world. They do not want to come down to a silly old imbecile like Louis the Eighteenth. You will only burn your fingers if you try it again. Let this be a lesson to you."

So saying, he bowed profoundly and left the old marquise humbled and silent, looking after him with a singular expression.

When he had gone away she said to herself half aloud:

"I hate that man. He is a fool, after all. If I had him down, I would not have spared him. He has not a grain of curiosity. And then he clings to the Corsican. But so much the better. If Camille has read the stars right, and there is any truth in astrology, he has not long to triumph. And when the king comes to his own again, and we have our day, then, we shall see who stands highest before the world, this upstart or—"

She stopped for she heard some one coming in, and presently Fanchette, looking demurely timid as ever, came softly toward her mistress, and faltered:

"Do they know, madame?"

"No, child, they do not. But thou art not fit to do these errands any more. Fanchette."

"Suppose they had taken me, I would have let them tear my flesh from my bones with red hot pincers; but they should never have torn a word from me."

"Nor from me either madame," answered Fanchette more firmly. "Indeed, no."

The marquise smiled.

"Foolish child, thou has nothing to sustain thee, as I have. Thou knowest that even the timid hen in the barnyard will face a lion in defence of her brood."

Fanchette blushed deeply.

"I know I am not a mother, madame; but, for all that, I think, though I am so afraid, that I could die for monsieur, rather than betray him."

The marquise looked sharply at her and read the story of the crimson cheeks with cool calculating approval, though she said aloud:

"Bah! child, thou knowest nothing of it. Nothing but one feeling will ever nerve thee to the faithfulness we require in these days of life and death."

"And what is that, madame?" asked the girl innocently.

"Love, child, the love that is willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the lord and master of our heart."

"I think, madame," said poor Fanchette timidly, "that I could even do that for the sake of monsieur—that is, anything that is not wicked, madame."

And she grew redder than ever as she looked down, while the hard old worldling eyed her like a hawk hovering over a chicken, watching every movement.

At last she said mockingly:

"Perhaps you would, anything that is not wicked madame. That is why I say you don't know what love is. Go, child. I will ring when I want you."

And as Fanchette retired, madame said to herself:

"It is the only way to make her faithful. She is young and innocent. Let her think she may be his wife, if she is silent and daring. Women will go through fire for love. Ah, God! did not I once do it?"

And the old woman's heart was full of memories, as she brooded over the days of her youth.

CHAPTER X.

HUNTING FOR A BURROW.

MEANTIME Gabriel, Count of Friedland, went away from the Marquise de St. Jean, with a new idea in his mind on the subject of The Man in Red.

The mysterious visitor had come to the palace by some secret passage, and these secret passages were only known to the members of the old noblesse. Madame de St. Jean then must know something about them. Fanchette had been surprised by a descent of the police in some house in Paris, and he had himself heard the emperor order No. 753 Rue Cruche d'Or, to be taken.

Was Fanchette there? Probably, but not certainly; for Fouché was always making descents on houses in the night. It might have been some other.

Granting it to be the house of the fortune-teller, who was the man the girl had gone to visit? Was he the mysterious Man in Red, or some other?

Whoever he might be, he had some close connection with the marquise. What was that connection? Gabriel could only think of one. He knew that the old lady had been separated from her husband before the Revolution, and was supposed to be childless; but there was that in the evident pain and anxiety of the marquise, in her words to him about being "in his power," that made him say to himself as he walked along:

"It is a man, and she loves him deeply. A woman of her age can hardly have a lover; but she may have a son whom she is ashamed to acknowledge, and yet loves all the more for the cloud that hangs over him. But if so, who is he, and what has he ever had to do with The Man in Red? Is he the man himself? I think I'll set Casse Tete to work on this with the little Norman maid. He is sharp."

But before he had a chance to do this, he was called to Paris by a courier from the emperor, and sent off on a mission to the court of Spain, which occupied him several months on matters of trifling importance, and put the whole matter out of his head for the time being.

When he returned, late in the year, he found the court at the Tuileries, and that he had been promoted to the command of the Imperial stables, as Master of the Horse, with an increased salary and rooms in the Tuileries, his old chief, Duroc, being Grand Marshal of the Palace, while the whirl of festivities over the birth of the King of Rome, which happened that winter, kept all gloomy apparitions out of his head.

So the winter of 1810-11 passed over, and all the world seemed at peace with France to rule over it; the English making no headway in Spain, with every prospect of a final collapse of what was now only, on the part of the Spaniards, a guerrilla warfare, the spring of 1811 opened with the emperor firmer than ever on his throne, and the wild predictions of The Man in Red further off than ever, to all seeming, from their fulfillment.

Gabriel, in his new position around the palace, was necessarily brought much into contact with various great people, and among others with the Duke of Otranto, Chief of Secret Police, who one day said to him:

"Apropos, my dear count, do you not remember a curious adventure we once had together in the crowd in front of the Tuileries, at the first day of the Wagram celebration?"

"I do, duke."

"I have never been able to find what in the world became of his majesty and you that night."

"You'd better ask his majesty, duke."

"Ask him? He would never tell."

"Then you can hardly expect me to do it, my dear duke."

Fouché looked at him slyly, with an evil sneer, as he answered:

"You are very discreet, count. I can divine one place to which you went."

"Can you? You are renowned for your penetration, duke."

"You need not sneer. You military men think you know a great deal; but, for all your own talent, you have not found out the secret of what happened in the palace of Fontainebleau a year ago."

"Have you, duke?"

"Never mind. Further, you made a bad job of it at 753 Rue Cruche d'Or."

"Did we?"

"Yes. You expected to find out a mystery, and it only grew deeper. My men went to seize the house, and found no one there. Mademoiselle Lenormand, the astrologer, had disappeared."

"But you lost a man in the descent, I heard, duke. How came that?"

Fouché looked at him curiously.

"How did you know that?"

"Never mind. I heard it."

"Yes, it is true. He was at the back door and was stabbed by a man who escaped with a woman. He fell dead instantly, and the man got off."

"But not the woman."

"Yes she did. The same man came out of the darkness on another of my officers, and knocked him senseless, just as he laid hands on her. But the house was empty. Not a soul to be found in it, and no one has ever seen Made-roiselle Camille Lenormand since, though believe that she was a famous woman for the way in which she told people all they had ever done since they were born."

Gabriel had heard enough and turned away from Fouche, whom he hated cordially in common with most people at the court. He saw that the wily Duke of Otranto was on a wrong scent. He had confounded Casse Tete with the man who stabbed the police officer. This argued that the two men must have resembled each other in figure.

Casse Tete and the unknown man were both tall and thin; another indication pointing to the identity of The Man in Red.

The news raised all his old curiosity to the fever heat and he began to wish he had found out more than he did when he was at Fontainebleau.

This again brought Madame de St. Jean to his mind and he thought he would find out some more about her.

He knew that his wife who had been fond of the old lady, kept up correspondence with her and he asked her carelessly one day whether she had heard from the marquise recently.

Inez answered:

"Certainly. Only last week."

"And where is she?"

"At the palace of Fontainebleau. You know she received a pension soon after we went away, through the good offices of the Empress Josephine. She is there yet."

Gabriel said nothing more at the time, but next day he obtained leave of absence from the palace, rode over to Fontainebleau and paid a visit to the Baron de Belleville, who received his ancient comrade with a rapturous welcome as a relief to the ennui he was suffering.

Gabriel dined with the baron and after dinner brought up the subject of the old palaces of France, of the medieval ways of building and finally of secret passages.

"Do you know, my dear baron," he said at last, "that I am convinced there is more than one secret passage in this old place?"

The baron looked at him knowingly.

"Ah, have you found that out?"

"Yes. Did you know it?"

The baron took a pinch of snuff.

"The witness declines to criminate himself."

"That means that you do know it?"

"I have not said so."

"But there are secret passages in this palace, are there not?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Do you know the whereabouts of any?"

The baron was silent.

"I am sure you do. Now, my dear baron, these passages ought to be known to the emperor of whom you are a sworn and paid officer."

"I don't see that."

"I will convince you."

"In what manner?"

"Easily. You admit that the emperor is the legal sovereign of France, crowned by his Holiness, the Pope, chosen by the unanimous vote of the people of France."

"Not quite. There were twenty-five hundred votes in the boxes."

"Yes. To about four million votes. I know you are a Royalist at heart—"

"No, no," interrupted the baron in alarm. "I never said so. Good heavens! You don't mean to denounce me; you, my friend."

"Calm yourself, I have no such idea; but this I say: If the enemies of the State make use of their knowledge of the secret passages at Fontainebleau to annoy his majesty and perhaps to lay plots to assassinate him—"

"There never was such a plot," cried the baron, hastily. "Never! I have always said that assassination is a mistake. Kill the emperor to-morrow and the king would never be able to return alive."

"Ah, you admit it, then."

"I admit nothing, count. What are you talking of? Do you come to dine at my table to destroy my digestion and frighten me to death?"

The poor baron was pale and his lips trembled as he spoke.

Gabriel pursued him mercilessly.

"I do not wish to frighten you, but I do wish and demand that if you have any knowledge of the secret passages in the palace of Fontainebleau, you will take me to them and show me what they are, in the name of the emperor."

The baron looked at him in positive and palpable dismay. His easy-going nature, sunk in sloth and good living, was no match for the firm resolute soldier.

"What do you mean?" he gasped at last.

"I mean that I have come here and I want you to tell me of the secret passages in this palace. If you decline, I must find them out myself, and when I have done so, I shall report them to the emperor."

The baron clasped his hands.

"For heaven's sake anything but that. I will tell you, if you will only promise not to let the emperor know anything about it. I swear to you that there is no conspiracy afoot. These passages have not been used for over a year past and then they had not been inhabited since the conspiracy of Cadondal and the Infernal Machine."

"Then they were used then?"

"My friend, that is all past and gone. It cost the lives of seventeen men and nearly a hundred were sent to Cayenne. I was not in that plot. I begged them not to try the Infernal Machine. I told them that the plot would recoil on their own heads. It did. Only one man escaped alive that the world thinks dead."

"And who was that?"

"Do not ask me. The honor of a lady is bound up in it, count. As a gentleman, I implore you not to ask me. See here. I will show you the secret passages, but you must promise not to reveal them to any one else."

"Why not, baron?"

"Because, if he knew to what use they had been turned and found out that I had known them all these years, I should be in danger, not from him, but from Fouche."

"And if I promise, baron, not to reveal to any one how I found out these passages? If I make up a story of finding them out accidentally, what then? Remember that I have made up my mind they shall never again be used to the prejudice of the emperor, and that they shall be secret no longer. If you hesitate, I shall think that you meditate fresh plots, and my duty will oblige me to denounce you at once."

The baron clasped him by the arm.

"For heaven's sake do not denounce me! I swear to you that they shall never be used again if you will keep the secret."

"Very well. I hold you to your honor as a gentleman to inform me if any one ever attempts so to use them. All I want is to be secure."

The baron drew a long breath.

"That I promise readily. They never shall be so used. Come with me and I will show you."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET PASSAGES.

THEY left the apartments of the baron, and Gabriel led the way to the part of the palace where The Man in Red had first appeared to the emperor.

The baron followed submissively; but the young count noticed that he kept glancing all round and behind him, as if afraid to be seen by some one.

"What is the matter, baron?" he asked.

"I don't wish to be seen. If you happen to see Madame de St. Jean, I implore you to give up the expedition for the day. She has sharp eyes."

"Then she knows of the passages?"

"Certainly, and if it gets out that I have betrayed them—"

"Well, baron?"

"I shall be despised, ostracised by my old friends. You don't know them, count. It is not the taking office they mind. The best of them have done that. It is the letting out of the secrets of a lot of old women. And then, too, I have reasons for wishing not to be on bad terms with Madame la Marquise."

Gabriel saw that the old gentleman's face was slightly redder than usual.

"I understand," he said, "you and the marquise are possibly about to marry."

"And why not, my friend?"

"There is no reason. On the contrary, I think it an excellent arrangement. But here we are, and no one has seen us."

Then they slipped in at a small door to which the baron had a key, and found themselves alone in the gloomy corridors of the old palace of Fontainebleau.

The baron led the way to the ante-chamber, where Gabriel had augured the existence of a door, and touched a spring, low down in the wainscoting, showing a door that opened into the corridor outside. In its appearance it was an ordinary panel, and it turned two ways, on a pivot in the midst thereof.

"These doors," said the baron, "you will find in every one of the old rooms of King Francis I. You know his majesty was a great man after the ladies, and had a desire to be able to introduce them into his rooms and let them out again without the knowledge of his chamberlains. If you want to find one of them, touch the base of the room and feel round with your foot wherever you see a carved flower. They are all alike in appearance, and it is only by experience you can find them. As you see, this opens in the corridor. Let us go out."

They passed into the dark corridor where Casse Tete had heard the laugh, and the baron continued:

"To enter a room from a corridor is just the opposite. Feel along the molding of a wall panel, with your thumb at the height of the eye, and press. When you come to the right place, it yields."

Then he went on and showed Gabriel the entrance to several rooms, in suits which had no visible communication, save with each other and anterooms. When he had done, the young man observed quietly:

"That is all very well, baron, but I see it requires a good deal of practice to master these. Is the secret a common property to the gentlemen of the old court?"

The baron smiled.

"Francis I. and Louis XIII. kept it to themselves, but when the Great Louis began to indulge in a dozen ladies at a time, the secret became no longer a secret at court. The ladies had other lovers, for even a king is not proof against French infidelity, and by the time of Louis the Martyr it was a privilege of the best families. No one was admitted to the secret who could not trace a noble genealogy at least as far as Henry IV., and they had a regular secret ritual, like the Masons. But that is all over now. The secret is not what it was."

"And were you sworn to secrecy?"

The baron fidgeted.

"Well, yes; but the Grand Master is dead, the order broken up, and we have not held a chapter since the days of 1793. Technically I am wrong to tell you what I have, but there is no one who can reproach me."

"And were ladies admitted to the secret?"

"Decidedly, my friend. Women can keep a secret of that sort better even than men; for it is their interest to do it."

"Very well, baron. And now for the passages we spoke of."

The baron affected to be mystified.

"The passages? I have shown them."

"Oh, no. These are only doors in the thickness of a wall. These are not at all in the nature of passages."

"These are all that I know of."

"I am sorry to ask you to tax your memory, baron; but there is at least one passage in this palace that leads out under the grounds, and possibly extends even into the forest itself."

The baron looked obstinate.

"I know of none."

"Very well, baron. Then you compel me to report to his majesty that I have made a discovery, and to ask him to send down some of the Imperial architects to examine the building. I think, with the aid of a few workmen, they will manage to dig out some of these rat-holes."

The baron looked at his wits' end, and presently said, in a deprecatory way:

"Do not be too hard on me. You are a gentleman. Suppose that a man's life depended on the secret, that a poor fellow, whose only crime was loyalty to his king was actually—"

"Living here? I thought so."

"I did not say it. Indeed I did not say it. I implore you, count, to urge me no more till to-morrow. I swear to you, on the honor of a gentleman, that I will then show you the way."

"And give your poor friend time to escape? Is that it baron?"

"I did not say it. I asked you only to be generous, M. le Comte. Your own father, as I have heard, was noble. You belong to our order. Do not expose to the malice of Fouche a gentleman whose blood is pure as your own, and whose misfortune is that he loves the lilies better than the vulgar tricolor of this upstart court."

The old baron was surprised into the warmth of genuine feeling, and said what he meant. Gabriel, rather nettled, retorted:

"Had I known you were a Chouan you might not have enjoyed the post you have so long occupied by the bounty of the emperor. The tricolor vulgar! It has waved over the triumph of Jena, when the lilies were dragged in the mire of Rosbach. Upstart court! For shame, man, when you eat its bread. Lead me on to this secret passage at once, or I swear, on the honor of a soldier of Jena, Austerlitz and Friedland, that I will call in workmen at once and tear down the walls in search of it."

The baron trembled excessively.

"My dear count, my dear friend, do not be angry. I will take you there. But promise me, on the word of a noble, that you will not harm any one you find there. You are armed and have a hot temper—"

"Yes, I am armed, and I don't intend to give up my sword, baron. I begin to suspect that there is more behind all this than I fancied. Who is this man that you have concealed in the palace?"

"I have concealed no one; on my soul I swear it. I do not even know if he be actually here. But there is a lady in the case, dear count, a mother trembling for her son—"

"I see, Madame St. Jean?"

"Yes, my friend—"

"Reassure yourself. I will not harm him if he does not attack me. I promise that on the the honor of a soldier. Now lead on."

The baron went a few steps and then stopped uneasily.

"But I must warn you," he said "that he is a brave man, and in danger of his life every day. Possibly he may attack you thinking you a police spy."

Gabriel smiled, loosened his sword in the sheath for he was in uniform and observed quietly:

"Let him try it. If you have any further objections, baron, state them in a hurry, for I am getting tired."

The baron went on a few more steps, and at last stopped.

"I cannot do it—I dare not. Take your sword and run me through. I cannot be a traitor and betray her and him too."

Gabriel could not use violence to an old man, though he felt angry. On the contrary, he could not help a certain respect for the poor baron. So he said, more kindly:

"I do not want you to betray any one. Show me the door, and let me find the rest for myself."

"It lies before you," answered the baron, in a low, stifled voice. "I cannot—"

"Show me how to open it, you mean?"

"Yes."

"You do not need to. Leave me here and go back; although I must say that I think you would do better to precede me, so as not to alarm your concealed friend. Tell him that I don't want to hurt him, but he can no longer make the emperor's palaces a home for his conspiracies."

"I dare not tell him," murmured the baron. "He is a terrible man. He might even accuse me of betraying him."

"In that case, I suppose your hidden friend is a dangerous customer. Thank you for the warning. Has he fire-arms?"

The baron made no answer, except:

"For Heaven's sake, come away."

Gabriel, instead of paying heed, was all the while examining the wall in front of him, which was apparently smooth masonry, with carefully-finished joints.

The baron watched him furtively till he placed his hand on the secret spot, when one of the stones shook and gave way inward, disclosing the handle of a door, with a lock and key-hole.

He turned the handle and beheld the door open before him, disclosing a flight of steps leading upward into the thickness of the wall.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RECLUSE.

THE Baron de Belleville groaned:

"I did not show you. Your blood be on your own head. He will kill you."

Gabriel laughed.

"In that case, it may be as well to proceed sword in hand," he observed.

So saying, he drew his sword.

"How do you open this door from the other side, baron?" he asked, quietly.

The baron snarled:

"Find out. I'll not show you."

The young man looked and saw an ordinary handle, while there seemed to be a window somewhere above the staircase, for the light streamed down from above.

Without further hesitation the young man walked up the stairs, observing as he went that the passage was built in the thickness of one of the tower walls, and only wide enough for one person at a time to pass.

At the top it entered a corridor of the same narrow dimensions, and he began to perceive how it was lighted, for another staircase was at the other end, and there were several round windows in the wall.

He remembered these windows, outside, as panels in the wall, without any glass, and found that the passage ran all round one of the towers of the palace, in the thickness of the wall.

It led upward, and therefore must end in the high pitched tower roof, which every one had thought to be only the abode of owls, bats or jackdaws.

On he went, three or four times round the tower, till he had nearly reached the eaves, when he heard some one call down the stairs:

"Who's that? Is it thou, my mother?"

Gabriel made no answer but to cough and wheeze like a fat person, and the voice called back:

"Oh, it is you, baron. Come up."

Gabriel went on up another flight of stairs, saw an open door before him, opening into an immense dark loft, which was only lighted, low down, by small bull's-eye windows under the eaves of the roof.

In the loft sat at a table, writing, a man, who had a pair of pistols lying before him by his papers.

The face of this man was long and pale. He had dark eyes, with an eager, restless look in them, and he was clean shaven, with a long, pointed chin and thin lips closely compressed.

The pale man looked up, saw the figure of Gabriel, sword in hand, and immediately put down his pen and laid his hands on his pistols.

Contrary to the young officer's expectations, he did not fire, but remained seated, watching the intruder out of his dark eyes as Gabriel advanced toward the table.

When he was within a few feet, the man at the table cocked both pistols and said sharply:

"Halt! You're near enough."

Gabriel halted and took the task of a questioner into his own hands.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here, monsieur?" he said.

The pale man scanned him coolly from head to foot, answering:

"That is for me to ask. Who are you, and what are you doing in my room?"

"Your room, indeed! This palace belongs to the French nation, and I am a French officer."

"Where's your commission?" asked the pale man, coolly.

Gabriel could not help smiling.

"Upon my word, you have the impudence of the devil himself."

"On the contrary, it is you who are the impudent one," retorted the stranger. "I think the best thing I can do with you is to shoot you down."

"You can do that if you please," returned Gabriel, sternly; "but you will give me the right to tell you with my last breath that you are a coward. I have no pistols; yours are cocked."

The pale man nodded approvingly.

"You have courage," he said, coolly. "You are not afraid to die. I do not need to take a pistol to you. Put down your sword, and I will lay down my pistols."

Gabriel hesitated, and the pale man said:

"Oh, very well. I will set the example. I am not afraid of you. See."

He uncocked his pistols and laid them down, when Gabriel at once sheathed his sword.

Then the stranger arose to his feet and showed that he was very tall and thin, dressed in black, with the appearance of a notary.

"And now, monsieur," he said, "let us both be clearly understood. Are you an officer of the police or not?"

"I am not," returned Gabriel, emphatically.

"At the same time I am an officer of the emperor, and it is my duty to ask you what you are doing here?"

The man in black scanned him from head to foot, rather menacingly.

"And if I decline to answer?" he said.

"In that case, monsieur, it will be my duty to have you arrested."

"I thought it would come to that. In that case, too, monsieur, allow me to remind you that you are in my power, and that I have only to kill you to be perfectly safe."

"You are wrong, monsieur."

"I should like to hear your reason for thinking me wrong."

"In the first place, I am a high officer of the emperor's palace on a day's leave of absence. If I fail to return to-morrow morning to the Tuileries I shall be asked after, and it will be found that I went to Fontainebleau. Consequently I shall be searched for."

The man in black compressed his lips.

"They can never find you."

"You think not. You imagine that the secrets of these passages are unknown to any but the Chouan party—"

"The Legitimist party," interrupted the stranger, sharply. "Confine your epithets to courtesy, monsieur."

"Very well; Legitimist, then. You think no one knows of this chamber but yourself and your friends. Yet you see I have found out the secret."

"That is true, but if I kill you it will be as much a secret as ever."

"Hardly. My death, if you kill me—and I do not say you cannot—will be laid at the door of my friend, the Baron de Belleville, whom I visited, and he will be arrested and compelled to confess."

The man in black looked angrily at him, as he snarled:

"The baron is a fool. You got the secret out of him."

"On the contrary, I found the door to this passage by myself."

"So much the worse for you. You will never find another."

"Again you are wrong, monsieur. You cannot assassinate me without a noise that will be heard in the grounds, and inquiry will be drawn to the place from which it comes. The end will be that the architects will come here, and by hunting up old plans in the archives will open all these secret passages to the light of day. You see, therefore, that there is but one course for you to pursue. You must leave this place at once and forever."

The man in black laughed sneeringly.

"Easier said than done. I do not intend to go away."

"You cannot stay. In fact, I cannot, for the life of me, see any object you can have in staying, except to enact the mummery, of which you are so proud. If you are plotting to assassinate the emperor—"

"I am not," interrupted the other, sharply.

"I could have killed him ten times over, spite of his guards, had I wished."

"Then since you are so proud of your power to do so, it is my duty to deprive you of that power."

"Enough has been said on that head, monsieur. Now tell me your name."

"When you have told me yours."

"It is unnecessary. I know who you are already. You are the Count of Friedland."

I am—no matter who I am. Now, monsieur, I will give you an equal chance with myself. I will not touch these pistols. You wear a sword. Yonder is another. We will fight fairly. If you had been a police officer, you would have been a dead man long ago. It is only because you wear the uniform of the army that I have spared you so far. I love the old colors. Now take care of yourself."

As he spoke, he went to a chair, on which lay a sword, drew it and came forward on Gabriel, who was thus compelled to defend himself.

The stranger was as tall as Gabriel, but his slender figure did not promise anything like the strength of the young cuirassier.

Nevertheless, the moment the swords crossed, Gabriel recognized that his foe was even a more powerful man than himself, with muscles of steel and an active hardihood, to which he could make no pretensions.

Accustomed to find his own wrist the most powerful, he was amazed to find his weapon nearly forced from his hand, in the first parade of the man in black, while only a leap back saved him from a return thrust through the body.

The stranger kept advancing on him slowly, with small motions of his sword, till Gabriel, Count of Friedland, who had never met his match till then, found himself driven back the whole breadth of the loft, without finding a chance for a thrust, till he broke away with a leap and made a fierce attack, striving to close in.

And then, still more to his amazement and mortification, he found himself disarmed at the third pass, while the man in black tripped him up with a supple strength that left him no sort of chance, and there lay the Master of the Horse, half-stunned, on his back, while the foot of the man in black was on his chest, and the point of a sword pricking the flesh right over his heart. Gabriel thought his last hour was come, but he looked fiercely up, for all that, facing his death like a man, and the stranger called out:

"Is it a fair fight or not? Have I taken a foul advantage? Say that I have, and you can take your sword again?"

Gabriel lay looking grimly up.

"Take my life," he said. "You've beaten me fairly. One of us had to die."

Then to his surprise, this strange man in black withdrew his foot, threw away his sword, and walked away, while the young man slowly rose to his feet, and said in a low tone:

"Why do you not kill me? It is your right and privilege, man to man."

The man in black had taken a seat at the table and was watching him in a singularly keen fashion, swinging one foot to and fro, and humming a low tune.

"I don't care to kill you," he said coldly.

"Had you denied my victory, I would have conquered you a second time and killed you; but I cannot kill a brave man."

"Then what are you going to do?" asked the young man, puzzled by this strange behavior.

"I have told you what I must do. It is my duty. I cannot flinch from it, except I am unable to perform it."

"You are unable to perform it," retorted the man in black sharply. "You owe me your life. It is mine to take if I will. If you inform any one of these passages and so lead to my arrest, you are a man of ingratitude, a coward, unfit to be a French soldier. Go now from this place. Do as you please. Do your duty as you call it, if you think best. I shall not stir from here. This palace was not built by your canaille of the French people, but by the King of France. You have no right in its secrets. You have obtained them by a trick, frightening an old man. Now add treachery to your other crimes, like him you serve. I have spared your life. Send a company to take mine if you will. I tell you I shall not go away."

His eyes seemed to shoot forth flames at Gabriel, while he spoke, and the young man hardly knew what to do at first.

Finally he picked up his sword by the blade and tendered it to the man in black.

"There is only one way out of this dilemma that I see," quoth Gabriel quietly. "Take your right and kill me. We both think we are right. Neither will yield. Kill me, then. If you do not, I must do my duty."

The man in black looked at him in the same keen fashion as before and took the sword.

"If I do not kill you," he said, "what will you do?"

"I shall go to the Tuileries and inform the emperor of these secret passages from which his enemies have practiced on him with a pretended specter."

The man in black laughed sneeringly.

"And if I kill you?"

"Then, as I said before, I shall be missed and you will be found out at last."

The man in black suddenly threw down the sword.

"I cannot kill you. Perhaps I am a fool. But there are other places in the world. This Bonaparte does not rule everywhere. I will make a bargain with you."

"What is it?"

"I will go away from here. Give me your word to keep the secret of these passages and I use them no more."

Gabriel hesitated.

"But others may use them."

"I promise for all. Will you do the same? Come, I don't want to kill you, but I must protect myself."

"I will promise," said Gabriel, slowly, "but your friends must leave the emperor alone."

The man in black laughed bitterly.

"You need not fear. He will bring his own fate on his own head. Turn your back, count ten, then look round."

Gabriel did as directed. When he wheeled round the loft was empty. The stranger had vanished like a spirit.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ATAMAN OF THE COSSACKS.

We must take a journey now.

Away from the sunny vineyards and whitening fields of Fair France, over the Rhine, the Neckar, and the Elbe, past the gloomy defiles of the Forest of Thuringia, the fertile meadows of Saxony, across the marshy wastes of the Vistula, and into the vast green solitudes of the Ukraine, in the month of June.

Around us lies a level plain, flat as the sea in a dead calm, without a single swell to mar the uniformity; and all this plain is knee-deep in grass and flowers, as far as the dim horizon.

Not a hillock breaks the monotony; but for all that there is nothing dull in the prospect, when one is on the steppe; for there is a sense of freedom about the limitless expanse, a keen, tingling pleasure in every breath of the perfumed breeze that reminds one of the sailor's feelings when he is out of sight of land, with a capful of wind blowing.

And for variety there is plenty of it, for there are at least three hundred different species of flowers in every acre of surface; and the wild bustards and florikens are springing out of the coverts on every side, while the steppe hare goes scudding away like a flash when he hears the hoofs of the horses, the falcon hovers in the blue sky overhead, and afar off we can hear the lowing of cattle, and catch sight of little clouds of smoke, that tell of Cossack encampments.

It was through the midst of this green ocean of vegetation, in the year 1813, that a little party of horsemen came riding at a gallop in the month of June.

They were all mounted on the hardy steppe horses that run half-wild, winter and summer, and defy the wolves, be they ever so hungry.

They were galloping as if they had but just started out, though their horses were reeking with sweat, and they all wore a sort of military dress, which could hardly be called uniform, but was decidedly warlike.

The leader was a young man in a green jacket, heavily laced with gold, with two rows of embroidered cartridge cases on his breast and an Astrachan cap on his head with a red top and gold tassel. His big crimson trousers were thrust into big brown boots, and he wore terrible spurs, while his gay shawl sash was stuck full of pistols, of which he had six. He wore no sword, but carried a heavy whip in one hand with a short handle and a lash six or seven feet long, in the shape of a snake.

His companions had pistols, lances, and a dress of similar shape but of all colors, and they wore no spurs, but carried whips of the same pattern.

Presently the young man called out:

"What smoke is that ahead of us?"

"It is the sonia of Nikolai Ivanovitch, little father," said one of the Cossacks. "He always has a hundred horses ready for the Czar's service."

"So much the better," returned the young man, lightly; "for this fellow I ride must have had a cow for his nurse, he moves so awkwardly."

To be sure the poor animal was laboring heavily, for it had been ridden twenty miles in an hour and a quarter, but the young man was not wont to regard the sufferings of horse-flesh much, being one of the Czar's couriers, whose business it is to kill horses by the score if thereby they can save an hour from St. Petersburg to Odessa.

So he dug in his spurs and brought down his heavy whip on the flank of the little black horse he rode, and the game creature answered gallantly, while the smoke ahead rose higher and higher, clear of the grass, till they could see the bee-hive shaped felt tents of the Cossacks, who in those days camped out like the Tartars.

Into the camp they rode, and found a good hundred tents scattered about, with herds of cattle, sheep and horses feeding about on the

steppe. Out of the felt tents came running the tall, muscular Cossacks, recognizing the uniform of the courier and calling to each other:

"Get horses quick! The Czar's messenger has come!"

From the principal habitation of the village came, too, a tall old man with a long white beard, who saluted the courier as he rode up, and asked:

"What is the news, Vassili Mattiovitch?"

"The Czar calls on his children to run to arms," cried the courier, in a loud voice, so that all could hear him.

Then he pulled from his belt a big parchment and read aloud:

"ALEXANDER, Czar of the two Russias, Archangel, Kier, Tobolsk, Irkutsk, Urim Tartary, and lord of all the true believers, to his children:

"Your emperor calls you to arms to repel the invaders. The holy soil of Russia is about to be profaned by the wicked French, who, having killed their own king, wish to rule over the people of Russia."

"To arms, my children, and drive the invaders home, as you once did the ferocious Tartars. Your emperor calls you! Will you desert him?"

"Especially, you Cossacks of the Don and Dnieper, you Zaporovians of the free commonwealth, you men who have conquered Siberia, and on whose lances rests the crown of Russia."

"Fly to arms. The Cossacks will unite at Smolensko, under their Ataman Platoff. God save Russia!"

ALEXANDER."

The reading of this proclamation was greeted with a wild shout of joy, and the Cossacks roared:

"God save the Czar! Death to the French! God save the Czar!"

Then they began to hug each other and dance for joy, till they were recalled to duty by the voice of their old Ataman, or Headman, who roared out:

"What are you fooling about? Cossacks, the edict is all read through and you are not yet in the saddle! Scatter and get the horses. We'll be the first at the meeting place of Smolensko."

And then, without so much as stopping to kiss their wives and children, the hardy warriors of the steppe ran off to the herd of horses, began to select their animals and lead them up, so that in less than two minutes after the courier had thrust the ukase back in his belt, the whole camp was a scene of bustle and martial ardor, in the midst of which, Vassili Mattiovitch threw himself on a fresh horse and galloped away with a couple of Cossacks out of this band, to carry the news over the steppe that the Emperor of the French was advancing to violate the soil of Russia.

And then, out of the ataman's huge felt tent, stepped a tall, thin man, with a pointed chin and very dark eyes, who said quietly to Nikolai Ivanovitch:

"I told you that it would come soon. I knew the man better than you did."

The old ataman shook his head:

"I did not believe it possible. No one has dared enter Russia since the Swede, and he had to flee without an army."

"This man is as bold as Charles XII., and brings ten times as strong an army with him," replied the thin man. "He will go to Moscow and take it."

The ataman curled his lip proudly.

"Not to Moscow. We will bury his army long before he gets there, lord general."

The pale man shook his head.

"I tell you he will get to Moscow and take up his lodging in the Kremlin, Nikolai."

Then the Cossack laughed aloud.

"Ah, now I know you jest, lord general. None but a Russian prince ever slept in the Kremlin, save as a prisoner. You are joking with me, because I am a simple Cossack, lord general."

"Indeed I jest not," replied the other in a tone of great gravity. "Great trials are coming on Russia, Nikolai. You will see more dead men this year than you have ever seen before, and we shall be beaten again and again. The man who is coming is a wonderful warrior. I have watched him from a boy, and know his very heart."

The Russian looked respectfully at the other, though there was nothing in his appearance to call for much attention beyond the fact of his extreme meagerness.

He was dressed in a sort of half military costume, but without arms, and wore the stars of a general on his collar.

"You are a learned man, general," said the ataman humbly. "We Russians can make a charge, but you men of the west know much more than we. Do you really think the French will reach our sacred Moscow?"

"I am sure of it, Nikolai, so sure that, if I had the command—"

"And why not, general?" asked the ataman, quickly. "The Czar knows that we Russians, while we can fight, are not generals, and he takes foreigners. There are Barclay de Tolly and Wittgenstein, and more besides. You might have the best command of all—"

The general shook his head.

"Not this time, Nikolai. It is true they have treated me vilely; but I cannot fight them myself, though I know the time is coming

for them to fall. I will watch and advise, but after all, your armies will not beat them, though they will be beaten."

Nikolai stared.

"Not our armies? Then what will?"

"Russia," replied the general slowly. "The winter, the snow, the cold."

Nikolai looked horrified.

"The winter! What, do you mean that we cannot drive them out all this summer and autumn?"

"I do, Nikolai."

"Then by the beard of Czar Ivan the Terrible, general, I'll show you that for once you are wrong."

"How, Nikolai?"

The Cossack smiled proudly and waved his hand toward the fast mustering troops of his lancers of the steppe.

"They will show him, general. Our men met his cuirassiers once at Eylau, and we speared them from their horses like so many sheep in a pasture."

"Yes, in a snowstorm, by surprise; but they put you to flight at Friedland, as I have heard, Nikolai."

The ataman colored slightly.

"Yes, I'll own they checked us there with a single regiment; but then they were devils. They were all black, horses, men, armor, and all; and our fellows thought there was a curse on them. Have you ever seen that regiment, general? They called them the Demon Cuirassiers at Friedland."

"I saw them at Tilsit."

"Ay, ay; but we will beat them, for all that, this time."

"You will not, Nikolai. The winter will, but as long as they have their horses, your men can never face them on the field."

The ataman tossed his head as if he did not believe it, and, just at that minute, a Cossack brought up a horse for each of the chiefs—for the general seemed to be known in such capacity—and they mounted without more ado and rode out of the camp, taking the road—only a cow-track, half hidden in grass—that led to Smolensko.

Three hundred men, on wiry little horses; a forest of lances gleaming in the sun; the Cossacks singing together one of their old war songs, in lieu of a band of music, to the accompaniment of a kettle-drum and a small guitar; on they swept at a rapid amble, leaving the women and children to look after the tents in their absence.

As the last wreath of smoke faded on the horizon behind them, the general said:

"Nikolai, you will not see the camp again, till you have seen Paris."

"So much the better," was the answer.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MARCH OF THE GRAND ARMY.

"You have but one positive order; keep your horses fresh, and collect all the forage you can. The Cossacks are a mere rabble; let them come close enough, and then ride over them."

The speaker was the King of Naples in person, and was addressing Count Gabriel of Friedland, as he sat on his big black horse at the side of the road, where his division of cavalry was massed, waiting the order to mount.

For Gabriel had received another step in the ladder of promotion at the beginning of the great Russian campaign, and had twelve thousand cuirassiers under his orders.

The King of Naples was in his element that day. Never had such a force been collected in Europe since the days of Attila and the Huns. Eighty thousand cavalry, twelve hundred guns and a half a million of men in arms covered the face of the country, and one might ride a whole day at full speed without getting out of sight of the dense columns of men on the march.

The emperor's head-quarters were at Thorn and the Grand Army was crossing the Niemen.

On the other side lay the territory of Russia, not profaned for a century back by the foot of an enemy.

Gabriel could see the glitter of bayonets stretching out to the horizon in front, and as far as he could see in the rear were the white tilts of the wagons.

They crossed the Niemen on five bridges and the steady stream of men kept on passing from dawn till dark, long after the cavalry had spread over the face of the country in front.

There were French, Prussian, Saxon and Austrian contingents in that Grand Army and the Italian troops had come with the King of Naples so that three distinct languages and a dozen different dialects were required by any staff officer who hoped to communicate with all.

It seemed as if such a vast host must overwhelm the country into which they were entering, and in truth they eat up everything on the road.

The cavalry, being in advance, had the best of the journey, for they came into fresh territory, but already there were symptoms that their march would meet serious opposition.

The Count of Friedland had the advance of the heavy cavalry and marched nearly thirty

miles the first day, without seeing any foe till near sunset, when he heard shots in the advance and pretty soon a hussar came in at a trot to say that the extreme advance had been fired on and roughly handled by a number of wild-looking savages who seemed to attack without order, each man on his own responsibility.

Nevertheless, they had killed three of the Eighth Hussars, wounded a score more, and carried off two officers prisoners, leaving only one dead man behind.

Then the young general ordered out two regiments to occupy the roads for five miles ahead and disclosed the fact that the Cossacks were only about three hundred in number.

And these three hundred had given a check to the advanced guard of twelve thousand cuirassiers and a regiment of light cavalry.

"Decidedly," said the count, in a thoughtful tone that evening, "these fellows have learned a good deal from us in the Friedland campaign."

He was addressing no one particularly, but, as usual, his orderly, Casse Tete, took up the parable and answered:

"Very true, my general. They are not good for much out of their own country, but any cock will fight on his own dunghill. And one must admit the country is only a dunghill. Not a hill higher than a mole's nest. But they live here, after all. Will your honor stop at that house for the night? It looks as if it had a good kitchen."

He indicated a large mansion ahead of them, surrounded by farm buildings, that had an air of comfort and opulence contrasting with the miserable huts they had seen so far. It looked like the home of some great Russian lord, and the count indicating his approval, the old soldier trotted off to prepare his master's quarters, while Gabriel issued orders for the encampment of the division for the night.

Casse Tete rode up to the mansion he had selected and found it surrounded by yards full of cattle and sheep, with a number of Russians at work feeding the animals for the night.

They looked at him with a mixture of sullenness and stupidity in their glances that showed how unwelcome was his visit, but offered no opposition as he rode up to the door of the house.

The fact that officers' servants to the number of near a hundred were roaming about round the house, and that the regiments were going into camp in the fields close by, had its effect on his reception, but no one came out of the door, though Casse Tete shouted till he was hoarse.

Finally he got off his charger, tied it to a post, and entered the open doorway, when he was at once hailed in French from the end of a long passage.

"What do you want here, soldier? Get out!"

Casse Tete drew his belt a little round, loosened his sword, and called out:

"Who the devil are you? Come out here and let's see you. The General Count of Friedland is coming here to take up his quarters for the night, so no nonsense."

"The general count can lodge in the fields," retorted the voice, and a stout gray-headed man came slowly forward. "The Princess Doktoroff is not obliged to lodge French robbers."

He was a regular Russian, in a sheep-skin coat and black velvet trousers thrust into his boots, but he spoke French like an educated man.

Casse Tete frowned ferociously at him.

"French robbers, eh? Well, which do you prefer—to lodge the general and have a guard put on all your property, or to have the place given up to the men?"

The gray-headed man shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll rob us anyhow," he answered, "and I suppose we shall have to submit to it. But never mind. Your turn will come before you get to Moscow."

"Where is the Princess Doktoroff?" asked Casse Tete, sharply. "You're an old fool, and don't deserve civil treatment, but I am sure the lady has better sense."

The old Russian looked amazed and shocked at the idea of a French soldier asking to see the princess.

"Her highness is indisposed," he said, in the stiffest manner, "and does not give audience to any one. I am her steward, Mattias Feodorovitch. I can transact all the necessary business."

Casse Tete had grown too impatient for further questioning. This Russian did not seem to have the least fear of him as an enemy, and he heard the clatter of accouterments in the yard outside, from which he judged his master was coming in, expecting to find his quarters ready.

So Casse Tete seized the old Russian by the throat, shook him hard and roared:

"Old pig, call out your servants and get dinner ready at once or I'll run you through the body. We want a dozen rooms at once with beds, and supper for twenty. Do you hear?"

The Russian turned purple with rage and struggled hard, but Casse Tete held him like a vise, and presently the old man gasped:

"Let me go. I'll do as you wish."

Then Casse Tete released him, and Mattias was as good as his word, for at his call a score of servants came running out, and when Count Gabriel rode into the court-yard and dismounted, he found everything ready as if at a hotel, and Mattias Feodorovitch was bowing at the door and welcoming him in good French.

The general entered the house and was taken up to a large and very sumptuously furnished saloon, where Mattias requested the officers to wait, and informed them that dinner should be served immediately.

Then he disappeared, and the young count began to examine the articles in the room with considerable curiosity, for it struck him with surprise to find so much luxury in the midst of a country where the people, as a rule, lived in mud hovels.

The first thing which attracted his attention was a large portrait of a lady which hung near a window.

It represented a beautiful dark-haired woman, with a stately, commanding presence; but what struck him most was the fact that the features were to him quite familiar, though he could not tell where he had seen them.

Captain Latouche, of the Death's Head Cuirassiers, a gay young Gascon on his staff, noticed the attention with which he looked at the picture, and said:

"A fine woman, general. I could fancy a man losing his heart to such a being easily enough. But she does not look like a Russian."

"No," said Gabriel, thoughtfully. "If it were not for the national dress, I could swear that was a Frenchwoman. Ask the steward who she is."

Mattias coming in very soon afterward, the captain made the inquiry, and the steward answered respectfully:

"That's the gracious princess, Olga Doktoroff, sir, the owner of this estate."

"Is she here now?" asked Gabriel.

"The princess is indisposed," was the stiff reply, "and sees no one. I am her steward."

Captain Latouche looked at his chief, and seeing encouragement in his eye, said to the steward:

"The general wishes to see the princess if she consents. You will take her the message at once."

"Yes," added Gabriel; "tell her we do not wish to insist if she be really ill, but we desire to pay our respects and to ascertain what property she wishes specially protected."

"I can tell you that," quickly answered the old steward, "without troubling—"

"Do as I tell you," retorted Gabriel, sharply, "and take care you give the message as I give it to you. I desire to see the princess. My name is General, the Count of Friedland. Be off."

He began to be suspicious of the constant denial of the princess, and wanted to see if he could remember who she was.

Mattias looked frightened and obeyed.

Presently he came back, looking very humble and subdued, and said:

"Her highness will receive you, general."

The general was following him, when there arose a great noise in some of the inner regions of the house, with the voice of Casse Tete raised in anger, and almost immediately the cuirassier burst into the saloon, driving before him with blows of the flat of his saber, a stupid-looking Russian cook, and roaring out:

"Poison us all, will you?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRINCESS OLGA.

"WHAT means this, Forton?" cried the young general, angrily, as his factotum drove the Russian into the room. "How dare you come in like that?"

Casse Tete knew, when his master called him "Forton," that he was angry; and it was necessary to justify himself, so he saluted and answered respectfully:

"Pardon, my general, but we are in the enemy's country, and it is necessary to be cautious. I found this fellow in the kitchen putting poison in the dishes meant for your honor, and I brought him up to know what we should do with him."

The officers of the staff looked at each other gravely, and Captain Latouche muttered to Captain Rochefort:

"The devil! This war will be no joke."

The young general, however, took another view, for he turned to the steward, who was very pale, and said to him:

"Ask this man whether he wants to poison us in reality. I don't believe it."

The steward spoke in Russian to the cook, who answered something in a sullen way, when Mattias Feodorovitch dealt him a sound box on the ear and began to scold him in Russian.

Count Gabriel interrupted him:

"Never mind talking to him. Tell me, did he really want to poison us?"

"I'm afraid he did, excellency; but indeed it was without orders, and I have scolded him for it."

He spoke as coolly as if the man had only been detected in a petty theft, and added:

"If your excellency will let him go, I'll see that he is whipped soundly."

But here the officers began to grumble so loud about "the example" that Gabriel cut the matter short by ordering the man to the guard-tent, and then said to his staff:

"I will rejoin you at dinner, gentlemen. Casse Tete, see to it thyself. We cannot afford to trust these fellows. Now, Monsieur Feodorovitch, lead on to the presence of the princess."

But here again Casse Tete, with his accustomed freedom, burst out:

"You should not go alone, my general. If the servants try to poison us, the mistress may have a dozen cut-throats hid in her boudoir. Let me go with you at least."

"Attend to thy duties, Forton, and keep thy tongue still if thou dost not wish to be sent back to France," answered his master, sternly.

"To France, my general?" retorted the incorrigible Casse Tete. "No such luck for us till next year, I'm afraid."

"Silence, and go to the kitchen!" cried the general, irritated beyond endurance.

Casse Tete saluted and vanished.

Then Gabriel followed the steward up and down stairs and passages, till they came to another saloon, into which he was ushered, while the Russian pronounced the words:

"The Count of Friedland, madame."

Gabriel advanced, saying:

"I deeply regret, madame, to put to inconvenience a lady of your rank and distinction, but war has no rules, you know."

He had got thus far when he saw the lady's face plainly for the first time, and stammered:

"Pardon me—but I am sure I have seen you before, madame."

It was the original of the portrait down-stairs, and the figure seemed to him still more familiar.

She was a lady, that was clear from the ease of her manner, as she answered:

"That is very possible, monsieur. In fact, it was only because I knew who you were, that I consented to receive you. You are not like the rest of this parvenu emperor's court. You have the old blood in your veins."

Gabriel drew himself up, for it was against his principles to hear the emperor abused.

"Pardon, madame," he observed; "but there is a rank conferred by genius which is superior to that of blood. We all honor Charlemagne far more than his impotent descendants, and it is the genius, not the blood of Peter of Russia that gives him the name of Great."

The lady smiled.

"I will not argue the point about the Czar Peter, who was a rude old savage; but I repeat I am glad to see you, because you have the old blood in your veins. Your father—"

"My father," he interrupted, "died for the Republic, madame, and there is nothing in the blood of a simple chevalier that is better than that of a citizen."

"Yet you are a count," she objected, with a mocking smile.

"Count of a battlefield, madame. Our nobility of the empire earn their titles as did the Paladins of Charlemagne, by the sword. A century hence, our descendants may be as lazy as those of the French noblesse of old times."

The princess looked at him in a manner indicating curiosity.

"Do you know," she said, "I have not heard such talk as that for a long time, count. And yet I was born in France."

"It is easy to tell that, madame."

"Why? My accent, I suppose."

"Partly, but I knew it before I heard you speak, madame."

"Indeed?"

"Certainly. As soon as I set eyes on your portrait in the saloon, I said that I had seen you before, and all my staff agreed that you had the true French air."

"Their penetration and yours were both admirable. But you must also remember that I am a Russian now, and that my husband commands an army against you."

"I had heard so, madame. In respect for him and you both I have ordered guards placed on all your property, to protect it from pillage."

"You are exceedingly kind, monsieur. And now let me ask you why did you come to this country?"

"To take Moscow."

"You will never take it, count."

"On the contrary, madame, we shall not only take it, but hold it, unless your friends burn it before we get there."

"And if by chance you get there, you will never get back alive."

"We shall see, madame. But I didn't crave the honor of seeing you to boast of what we are about to do. It was in truth to tax my memory, in sight of your face, and to find out where I had actually seen you before."

She smiled in the same mocking way.

"And you think you have seen me?"

"I am sure of it, and in Paris; but I cannot remember the Princess Doktoroff as being ever there."

"The Princess Doktoroff never was there, my dear count."

"Ah, then you have been married recently, princess. I wish I could tell where I saw you."

"You need not try. You will never know; but I have seen you before, and even spoken to you, though at the time I was wearing a disguise."

"A disguise? Was it at the masked ball, by chance?"

"It was not. I do not need a mask to disguise me. But never mind, count. You say your officers are with you here. I am sorry for that, for I wished to invite you to dinner, and I don't care to welcome any but those of the old blood. I am, as you see, a good rank Legitimist, so far as I am a Frenchwoman."

"I believe there are a few ladies left of that persuasion," laughed Gabriel, "but they are all emigrants. In France we no longer cry for the moon."

"And yet," answered the princess, quietly, "if I were to tell you that, this day two years, Louis XVIII. would reign in the Tuileries, you would say I was mad."

"I decidedly should. The emperor is the first man in Europe, and when he has taken Moscow he will have no enemies left."

The princess shrugged her shoulders.

"You will see when it is too late that I have told you the truth, and then, if you wish a place at court, you can remember that I have promised you my influence with the king. You know I have the gift of prophecy in me, and never make mistakes."

Gabriel could not help smiling.

"I never knew but one person like you, who pretended to the gift."

She started slightly.

"Who was that?"

"A madman, who obtained access to the emperor's tent at Wagram and told him that he should die a prisoner on a rock in the ocean."

"A madman, you say! Why mad?"

"Because his prophecy was absurd."

"But when it is fulfilled, what then?"

"If it is fulfilled you mean—not when."

"Well, if—"

"Then I should say he was a wonderful man."

CHAPTER XVI.

BORODINO.

GABRIEL did not find out to his own satisfaction who the princess was and where he had seen her; but he was not poisoned at her house, and departed next morning for Wilna, toward which the march tended, where the serious work of the campaign opened.

Everywhere the Grand Army met the Russians, and everywhere the Russians fought them hard, falling back from one strong place to another.

The heavy cavalry found no enemy to meet them in a charge, but the Cossacks hovered round them all the while, and, everywhere they went, clouds of smoke ahead showed where the Russians were burning haystacks and wheat ricks.

The young count obeyed his orders in the strictest way, making his men walk and lead their horses, and giving the animals all the opportunity to graze that he could, but in spite of all his efforts he had the mortification to see the big chargers that used to tramp so proudly along, growing thin and plodding stolidly on the road to Moscow, with their heads down.

The campaign that had opened with such high hopes seemed to be doomed to be one which would destroy the heavy cavalry without a fight.

But the army reached Wilna and advanced on Witepsk, where they found large magazines of grain, and all seemed to smile on them again.

It had taken a month to get to Witepsk, and that city was only half-way to Moscow.

And another ominous fact was that the emperor halted to reorganize there, sent back dismounted men, and found that his cavalry had shrunk from eighty to sixty thousand already, of which remainder nearly a third were not fit to charge.

This too, without a serious battle, and they heard that the three separate armies of the Russians had united at Smolensko to oppose them, under General Barclay de Tolly.

Gabriel's division at this place won a rare distinction from the emperor.

His majesty praised them in orders for the fine condition of their horses, and the praise made every cavalry general in the army jealous of the boy Count of Friedland.

In all this time the old Death's Head Cuirassiers, of which Gabriel was so proud, had remained quietly on the march, as the personal escort of their general; and their horses were the fattest in the command.

From Witepsk, after a few days, they moved out. The Russians were actually advancing from Smolensko to attack them and the veterans of the Grand Army began to crack jokes.

"Now we shall have a chance. As long as these devils burn the food we have to go slow; but now they'll have to starve as well as we."

And they did have a chance to see the enemy and fight him at last, from which ensued a whole weary month in which the sound of

musketry and cannonading was never out of their ears, till the excitement of contest died away and one could see the soldiers shrugging their shoulders with an air of despair. Every time they had an order to move forward, while one said to the other:

"No rest for us nowadays, and what does it all amount to? We kill them, and more come on. It is disgusting."

Still, to the general officers, who had maps, and knew what was going on, it was plain that the army was advancing—slowly perhaps but still advancing.

In the first month they got from Grodno to Witepsk—two hundred and forty miles; the second took them from Witepsk to Smolensko, only eighty; the third was one continuous series of small battles, on a line two hundred miles long, till the Grand Army found itself at last, within a day's ride of Moscow, on the little river Moskwa, with the whole Russian army barring the way at the village of Borodsk, which the French called Borodino.

And here at last Gabriel, Count of Friedland, on the 7th September, 1811, found himself in a pitched battle, for the first time since he gained his title in 1807 at the head of his old regiment.

The tide of battle had been ebbing and flowing all day with varying success, and still the Russians held their own, by dint of a huge redoubt in the center of their line, from which wave after wave of French infantry had recoiled, shattered and bleeding.

Gabriel had been standing by his men on the summit of a little hillock, watching the contest, which seemed to be trembling in the balance all day; and, for the first time since he had crossed the Niemen, began to think to himself that the Grand Army might have to retreat and never see Moscow, after all.

The streams of wounded men and the stragglers going to the rear were getting heavier every moment, and things began to look bad for the French as far as could be seen, for the smoke that covered the field; when a staff officer came galloping up, and called out:

"You're going to have a chance, count."

"Glad of it," said Gabriel, and he really meant it; for he and all his men had been chafing at their enforced idleness, while the infantry and the hussars had been in action every day.

But the staff officer went on his way, and still no order came.

Gabriel could see, through his glass, the emperor on a hill, sitting down in a camp-chair contrary to his usual custom, and he heard from another officer, whom he stopped as he passed by, that his majesty was very ill that day, and suffered much pain. No one then knew or suspected that it was the first attack of that terrible cancer in the stomach of which his father had died before him, and which was ultimately to carry him off at fifty years of age, in the torments of hell.

Only the wavering line of battle, to the discerning eye of the young general showed the waning force of genius.

"His majesty is not fighting in his usual way to-day," he thought to himself.

Then he saw a general officer ride up to the emperor, and salute as if he were speaking to him.

Through the glass Gabriel saw the great man nod his head, and then the officer dashed away, coming straight toward Gabriel's division. The young count knew him by sight as Auguste de Caulaincourt, who had been married at Paris only twenty days before he started for the Russian campaign.

He knew that the count was coming for him, and mounted his whole division to be ready. They were going to move, but where.

Before them lay a field full of infantry, with a line of fortifications lined with fire and smoke. That was the place for infantry, for no one ever heard of cavalry storming fortifications.

But very soon young Caulaincourt came dashing up and said to the astonished cuirassier:

"General, his majesty directs that you storm that redoubt with your division. The Young Guard will follow you; but it must be taken at any cost."

For one moment Gabriel felt his heart stand still. He had seen five assaults on that redoubt hurled back already, and he knew that it mounted twenty pieces of artillery, besides being lined with infantry.

The walls were mounds of earth, with a broad ditch, barely practicable for a horseman in cold blood, and it was into that ditch and up that mound that his cuirassiers had to climb to reach the enemy.

Then he set his teeth firmly, and said to Caulaincourt:

"Very good, general. Do you wish to go along with us?"

"Of course," was the instant reply. "I should not bring an order of this kind if I did not expect to see it carried out under my own eye."

"You shall see it, monsieur."

Then he gave the orders, and in a few minutes more twelve thousand gallant horsemen, headed by the old Death's Heads, were moving

at a slashing trot over the plain of Borodino, till they were swallowed up in the smoke.

The infantry shouted to see them come, and they heard the drums beating behind them while from the front the fire redoubled and the patter of bullets on the cuirasses and helmets sounded like hailstones in a forest.

Every now and then came the horrible "swish-sh-sh" of a volley of grapeshot, followed by the thud of the striking balls and the cries of men knocked from their horses, maimed and dying.

The ranks of the Death's Head Cuirassiers looked dark and ragged, and the officers kept shouting to the men to "close up," but still the gaps continued and broke out in fresh places, as fast as closed up.

The first squadron was nearly gone, and the regiment was reduced to half the breadth with which it had ridden out. The other regiments behind it were broken up into parties that rode on as best they could.

But still on they went, Gabriel ahead of his whole division, young Caulaincourt abreast of him, a squadron away, and before them opened the broad ditch, while on the further side rose the tall green mound, fringed with fire.

The Russians fired faster than ever, but their bullets went overhead now, and with a wild shout of fury the mailed horsemen rode into the ditch, climbed the green mound, and burst into the redoubt like a torrent.

And then came a great hush over the field of battle. The Russian guns ceased to fire, the infantry in the redoubt threw down their arms, and the battle of Borodino was won.

Cut in half and fearing for their baggage and guns, the Russians fell back, and the road to Moscow was open.

CHAPTER XVII.

MOSCOW.

THE Cuirassiers of the Guard rode into Moscow on the 15th of September and the first thing they saw was a cloud of smoke from a burning block of houses, while there seemed to be hardly any people in the streets.

Captain Latouche had a dozen men with him, who were the first to enter the city; and as they passed on they were fired at from a cross street ahead, by a few Cossacks, who galloped away on their fleet ponies, defying pursuit by the heavy charges of the cuirassiers.

But the Grand Army had reached the long expected city of Moscow, and the great Emperor of the French took up his quarters in the Kremlin, while the sappers put out the burning houses, or pulled them down.

That night Count Gabriel of Friedland, who slept in the Kremlin as commander of the cavalry of the body-guard, was roused from his sleep by Casse Tete, who said to him hurriedly:

"Get up, my general, there is a fire in the next room."

In fact the place was full of smoke, and they had hardly time to get out before three rooms were full of flames, which it took them some hours to quell.

Then all was quiet till the morning, when the trains began to rumble into the town, a regular garrison was set, the army was put into camp round the city, and the French settled down to enjoy the fruits of their victory.

Moscow was theirs—at a dear cost—but it was theirs; and they had the satisfaction of knowing that the Russians must have suffered no less heavily.

The hospitals were established, the roads patrolled, convoys brought in and order restored, and then came word to the Count of Friedland that the emperor wanted to see him.

He found the captor of Moscow in a grand, picturesque old saloon, where the Czars of Russia had been crowned from the fourteenth century. The Man of Destiny looked gloomy and worried, as Gabriel had never seen him before.

"Count," he said, abruptly, as soon as the young general entered the room, "will you volunteer to take a flag to the Emperor Alexander for me?"

"Certainly, sire, but I thought—"

He stopped, for he felt that he was too hasty, and the emperor's cold stare showed he had remarked it.

"I don't want my officers to think, except when they have no orders, count. You thought, I suppose, that it was their place to send to us, since we have beaten them. Very well, it seems they are obstinate. The Turks used to be the same in Egypt. We must make allowances for savages. I am going to send a flag to the Czar."

Then he paused and drummed on the table. Evidently the emperor was embarrassed. For the first time in his life he found a foe he couldn't frighten, but who would fight after the hope of victory was gone. The conqueror of Borodino had not taken a gun that was not disabled.

Presently he began again:

"I shall have to trust to your discretion not to expose our weakness."

"Our weakness, sire?"

"Yes. How many men do you think we have left, fit for duty, count?"

"Two hundred thousand, at least, sire."

"Not a hundred and fifty. And the cavalry is almost disabled. We shall have to forage, unless we get an armistice. The convoys have not three days' grain."

Gabriel felt his heart sink. He had not known it was so bad.

"We can winter in Moscow," continued the emperor; "but only if they do not disturb our lines of supply. Therefore it is necessary to secure a truce. You will go to the Emperor of Russia, and offer him peace from me. Here is the letter. I'll read it, that you may know what is before you."

He read out, with a voice that was not as steady as usual, the first confession the Man of Destiny had ever made that an enemy was not to be beaten:

"SIRE, MY BROTHER," ran the note:

"I am weary of seeing the blood of brave men sacrificed in vain. To what does it all tend but the alienation of two brave nations, whose interests are one? Let us be friends. Why should your majesty cling to the cause of perfidious England, when, united, we can sweep the world? I am willing to give up the territory I have acquired, and to retire into Germany, if your majesty will make peace. I will agree to help your majesty with three army corps to conquer Turkey, and you can have Constantinople. Therefore I ask for an armistice, during which our ministers can conclude a lasting treaty of peace."

NAPOLEON.

Gabriel listened silently, and the emperor said as he folded the letter:

"Are you willing to go?"

"I always obey orders, sire."

"But I must warn you that you will incur danger. These wild savages may not respect the flag."

"In that case, sire, they will disgrace the Czar, and my death, if they kill me, will not go unavenged."

The emperor looked at him, for the first time in all their intercourse, with a glance of something like real kindness.

"You are a brave man, count," he said, slowly. "I wish all my supporters were as true to their chief."

"Every soldier of the Grand Army would willingly die for you, sire."

"Yes, every soldier. But the marshals—they wish to enjoy their honors. They grow tired of war. Never mind. You will take the flag. The Russians are at Kaloga, to the south. Our pickets are out ten miles on the road, and the Cossacks are just beyond. Apropos, count, I hear your quarters were on fire last night. How did it happen?"

"No one knows, sire. It broke out in an empty room."

"Hem!"

The emperor frowned thoughtfully, and walked to the window to look out.

Gabriel's eyes followed his, and saw three columns of smoke rising in different quarters of the city, while the sappers were hurrying through the streets and the bells were ringing an alarm.

And while he looked, they saw two hussars come up the street toward the Kremlin, dragging between them by the wrists a man with a long beard, who was running as hard as he could, to avoid being dragged along the ground.

Presently came a knock at the door, and Duroc entered hastily.

"We have found where the fires come from, sire," he cried, without any prelude. "The patrol has just caught one of the savages at his work. What shall we do with him?"

"Shoot him," answered the emperor, coldly. "Treat them like Turks, Duroc. We must strike terror to them, for they understand nothing else. Issue an order that for every fire I will shoot a Russian, if one is to be found in the city. We must stop this or be houseless."

Duroc vanished, and the emperor went on to Gabriel:

"You will take only a single man with you, and of course use your eyes on the way. If you see the emperor I think he will treat; but the courtiers may not let you see him."

"I will do my best, sire."

"The point is to procure an armistice. We have taken Moscow, you understand; and can remain here if we please, but do not desire further effusion of blood."

"I understand, sire."

Then Gabriel went to his quarters, called Casse Tete and rode out of the city on the road to Kaloga.

Casse Tete carried a lance with a white flag rolled round it, and wore the uniform of his old regiment, but looked gloomy.

"It is not the custom of the Grand Army to ask for truces," he had said to the count. "Hitherto they have always granted them. But times change, my general, and these Russians are savages."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FLAG OF TRUCE.

THE young general and Casse Tete rode rapidly away on the road to Kaloga, passing camp after camp of the infantry and huge parks of artillery and wagons.

The Grand Army was still a magnificent body in appearance, though one could note that

the uniforms were getting ragged and dirty, after the hot, dusty campaign through which they had passed.

The weather was warm and dry, and a thin haze hung over the landscape, the grass lying brown and dry by the roadside.

The country was rolling and pretty in outline, melting toward the south, into the great Black Earth plains of the Ukraine, of which they had heard so much.

When they had ridden about five miles they passed the last infantry camp, and the country seemed to be entirely deserted.

The peasantry, it was to be remarked, had vanished. Every now and then they came on a few low mounds of turf that they knew to be the underground huts of the inhabitants; but no smoke came from the chimneys, and not a soul was near them.

Three miles beyond this they saw a regiment of hussars in camp. The horses at the picket line were thin, and a number had sore backs, while the men looked dirty and neglected.

They met an officer coming back with a patrol, and he told them that the light cavalry was pretty well worked out.

"It's lucky we've taken Moscow and can afford to rest, general," he remarked to Gabriel, "for another week would have found us dismounted. Have you heard anything of the grain wagons? We have been grazing the horses for a month, and haven't seen a bag of oats all that time."

Gabriel comforted him with the hopes of a truce, and rode on.

A mile further they came to the picket reserve, and he saw that the sentry was dismounted.

The officer of the reserve told them that all the pickets had orders to stand guard on foot to save the horses.

"The Cossacks are quiet enough," he added, "in the daytime, but at night they keep us alive, and seem to have a spite against our horses, for they have shot a number. At this rate we shall all be dismounted before long."

To a question as to the outside vedettes, he answered that they were a little way off, on foot, and that the nearest Russian post was about two miles further.

As the two cuirassiers rode on, Gabriel could not help a gloomy foreboding of evil in his heart; and Casse Tete, in his homely fashion, began to moralize:

"These Russians are different from the rest of Europe, general, and they have a country that helps them. I wish we were well out of it."

"So do I, Casse Tete," Gabriel could not help answering.

At last they came to the line of vedettes, who looked at them with surprise, and the man on the road said respectfully to Gabriel:

"It is not safe to go any further, my general. The Cossacks are over the hill yonder."

"Then that is our destination," was the calm reply of Gabriel. "Show the flag, Casse Tete."

The cuirassier shook out the white folds, and they rode forward, side by side, the full uniform of Gabriel and the stout, well-fed chargers of both of them presenting a splendid appearance, and telling nothing of the straits to which the grand army was reduced already.

They trotted rapidly on to the little hill of which the vedette had spoken, and surmounted it in full view of a group of three Cossacks sitting on the ground by a fire, about a hundred yards off.

The horses of these three men stood by them; their lances were stuck in the ground, and they seemed to be cooking their dinner.

Other little groups, at intervals of a quarter of a mile, could be seen dotting the landscape all round and lining the road for three miles back, to where a cloud of smoke announced a larger encampment.

No sooner did the two cuirassiers make their appearance than the three Cossacks jumped up and each picked up a musket from the ground.

One of them ran to the middle of the road and leveled his musket.

Gabriel waved his hand, pointing to the white flag, and pulled up his horse, shouting in French:

"It is a flag! a flag!"

But the Cossack fired off his piece without heeding the cry, and the bullet went singing past Gabriel's head in very uncomfortable proximity, and a moment later the other two men fired also, but with such defective aim, owing to the distance, that neither of the Frenchmen was hurt.

Then Gabriel put spurs to his horse and dashed down toward them, while they were trying to reload, still pointing to the flag and calling out the only Russian word he knew:

"Stoi! Stoi!" [Stop! Stop!]

His behavior had its effect even on the wild savages of the Don. They saw he was not afraid, and stopped the hurried loading of their rusty old muskets.

One of them began to speak Russian, as if asking questions, and Gabriel answered in French:

"A flag! a flag! Letter to the Czar."

He showed the Cossack the letter, kept point-

ing to the flag and making signs till the savage suddenly seemed to understand what was wanted, and his face beamed all over with smiles. Then he said to Gabriel something in Russian which the latter could not understand, but took to be an explanation of his mistake, and the matter ended in one of the three Cossacks riding off toward the encampment at full speed, while the emissary of the French emperor was fain to wait further developments.

He did not neglect to use his eyes during this time, and noticed that all the little groups of Cossacks, on the way to the encampment, had mounted their horses and were riding slowly out on either side, as if to cut off his retreat.

To show his own indifference he quietly dismounted from his horse, took the flag from Casse Tete and stuck the staff in the ground while he was waiting, his orderly imitating his example.

Meantime the Cossacks kept on advancing till he was surrounded by at least a hundred of them staring at him as if he had been a wild beast, and talking to each other about him in Russian, of which he only understood the word "*molodyetz*," frequently repeated. And he had heard from a Russian prisoner that *molodyetz* meant "brave fellow."

Therefore he judged that the Cossacks were impressed with his looks and those of Casse Tete.

After half an hour's patient waiting he saw a cloud of dust coming rapidly toward him, and distinguished the glitter of weapons and waving of plumes in the midst of it.

"Take up the flag, Casse Tete," he said.

"Here comes an officer at last."

They mounted and remained there till a brilliantly uniformed officer in scarlet and gold came dashing up at the head of a troop of Cossacks in the same bright color and made a polite salute to the young general, saying, in excellent French:

"Good-day, monsieur. Very sorry to have kept you waiting, but these fellows of ours don't understand the customs of war. Whom have I the pleasure of addressing by chance?"

"I am General the Count of Friedland with an autograph letter from his majesty the Emperor of the French to his majesty the Emperor of Russia. Whom have I the honor to see?"

"I am Count Freodor Doktoroff, of the staff of Prince Platoff, Ataman of all the Cossacks. If you will give me your letter, general, I will send it in at once."

"That is impossible, count. If I cannot deliver it personally I must go back with it undelivered."

As he said this, Gabriel felt his heart beating unwontedly, for he was afraid the Russian would take him at his word and send him back.

He was a handsome young fellow, this Russian count, with brown eyes and a downy mustache, and he looked like a gentleman; but it was evident, also, that he was no fool, but on the contrary, skilled in negotiation.

"I think that would not be desirable, general," he answered, smilingly. "If there is a letter from such a distinguished man as the Emperor Napoleon, it must be delivered to him; but, at the same time, it is not necessary to conduct you through our quarters."

"Is not the emperor near here, then?" asked Gabriel.

The young Russian laughed.

"We can find him if we wish. I will insure the delivery of the letter."

"But that is not the point, count. I wish a personal answer to the letter and the common courtesy of warfare forbids this flag or myself to be treated with any disrespect. I wish to see the Czar."

"That, I regret to say, is against the orders, general; and you, as a soldier, know that we have to obey them."

"Then take me to the commanding general of the forces before me. I am a general-officer and have a right to treat with my equal in rank. You bear only that of captain, I believe."

"That is true, general, but I represent my general, with full powers."

Gabriel drew himself up proudly.

"Enough. I will go back and it will be proclaimed throughout Europe that the Russians do not know how to respect a flag of truce. Good-day, sir."

He was turning his horse when the young captain said, smoothly:

"Pray do not be angry, general. I think I see a way by which we can settle this matter amicably."

"And what is that?"

"I can conduct you to the presence of the Ataman, but it will be necessary for you to be disarmed and blindfolded."

"And is Prince Platoff your nearest commander?" asked Gabriel.

The young count laughed.

"You must not ask questions. I will take you there. Your man, of course, will stay here. I will leave one of my sergeants with him who can talk French, and he will find himself well treated, I hope."

"What, have you a sergeant who talks French?" asked Gabriel in wonder.

Why not? We are not all, as you perhaps imagine, savages. Here, Vassili."

A short, stout Cossack sergeant rode out, saluting, and the captain continued in French: "You will take care of this honest soldier, Vassili, and if you finish a bottle of vodka, his majesty will pay for it."

"Very good, my captain," replied Vassili, and Gabriel started as he spoke, for the accent was unmistakably Alsatian, of the peasant kind. But he had no time to ask questions, for Count Feodor continued briskly:

"Now, general, if you will produce your handkerchief we will make all secure and lead you to our camp."

Gabriel complied and the Russian took care to bind his eyes securely, so that he could see nothing. Then he gave up his sword, a Cossack took hold of his bridle reins on each side and the little troop trotted off.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ATAMAN AT HOME.

GABRIEL was determined, blindfolded or not, to find out all that he could as to the disposition of the Russian forces, and put his wits to work at once.

His only means of judging as to the way he went was by noting the turns of his horse, and listening to catch any sounds that indicated camps near by; but his astute conductor was determined not to give him even this slender chance if he could, for he entered into a gay and unmilitary conversation with him, at once plying him with questions about Paris and musical matters, pictures, books, celebrated philosophers, and the like, that interested Gabriel in spite of himself and compelled him to answer.

Thus he soon lost sense of the way he was going, though he knew they had got off the hard road and were winding in and out of a number of devious passages, while the buzz of voices and stamping of horses showed they were in some camp.

He did not suspect what was actually the case, that Count Feodor was taking him up and down the streets of a single *pulk* or regiment of Cossacks on purpose to bewilder him and only wondered at the length of the ride, which lasted nearly an hour, when they again struck off at a sharp trot over a sandy heath and rode straight away for another half hour till Count Feodor said to him:

"We are nearly there now."

Presently they halted and heard a great clattering of arms, and Count Feodor said:

"Please to dismount now. We are there."

Gabriel complied and was about to push off his bandage when he felt the other seize his hands and heard him say:

"No, no, general, not yet. On honor, you know; on honor."

So he had to remain blinded till the count had taken him by the arm and led him across a yard that was strewn deeply with litter, thence into a house of some kind.

Then he heard a door close behind him, and some one said:

"You can take off the bandage now."

He was not sorry to obey the order and found himself in a small room, with earthen floor and brown rafters overhead, between which shone a smoke-begrimed thatch. The solitary window had no glass in it but oiled linen instead and the furniture consisted of two stools of wood and a long settee or bench.

He took in all this at a glance and then perceived that there were two people besides himself in the room.

One of them was a short man, with the body of a giant, a long beard that had been red and was now nearly white; a Cossack uniform so loaded with gold lace that he was evidently a person of some distinction; and a broad Tartar face with brown eyes that twinkled at him over the china bowl of a German pipe that he was smoking furiously.

But it was the second person who arrested Gabriel's attention most; for in him he beheld the mysterious recluse of the secret passages of Fontainebleau, whom he had suspected of playing The Man in Red before the emperor.

The stranger was attired in the undress uniform of a Russian general, a dark green coat coming nearly to his heels and a round cap, both laced with silver.

He evinced no recognition of his former antagonist, however, but said:

"His highness Prince Platoff, does not understand French. I am here to interpret for him, general. What is your errand?"

"I bear a letter to the Czar from his majesty the Emperor of the French, monsieur. I desire permission to present it in person to his majesty of Russia."

The strange general translated, but the Cossack Ataman shook his head and made some answer in Russian, blowing the ashes out of his pipe in a manner strongly indicating contempt toward the request.

"The prince says the idea is not admissible under the circumstances. He will forward your letter—"

"But how shall I get an answer? It is very important, monsieur—pardon me, but I do not know your name."

"My name is—never mind. You can call me Interpreter if you please. Your answer will come soon enough. You may be sure of that."

"And you positively refuse to let me see the Czar? Remember that the Emperor Napoleon is not accustomed to send, but to receive flags, monsieur. Common civility dictates that when the greatest monarch of Europe sends an autograph letter to his brother sovereign no outsider shall interfere between them."

And Gabriel's voice rose to a tone of anger as he spoke, for he was mortified and humiliated at the way he was being treated by those Russians he had beaten at Friedland and Borodino.

The general without a particle of emotion translated his address and the Ataman of the Cossacks laughed—actually laughed as he answered in the driest conceivable tones:

"His highness says," reported the interpreter coolly; "that the Emperor of the French, if he be such a great man, should have kept at home in his own country. He has come to Russia and will find out before next year, that he is only a man like the rest of the kings Russia has beaten."

"The answer," returned Gabriel hotly, "is what might be expected from a savage like those who fired on my flag to-day. I will take back my letter and your blood be on your own heads."

Again the interpreter translated, and this time the Ataman looked disturbed, asking questions which the other repeated to Gabriel:

"His highness wants to know if you positively will not deliver your letter to him?"

"No. I will take it back first. I was sent to see the Czar and I will see him or go back."

"But if you go back, your letter will not reach the Czar and we shall not know what your emperor wishes."

"So much the worse for you."

And Gabriel turned away and was going to the door when the Ataman cried:

"Stoi! Stoi!"

He halted and the Russian said something to the interpreter who reported:

"His highness is willing to have you sent on to the Czar if you can assure him that the emperor desires peace."

"I can," replied Gabriel. "I have read the letter myself."

"And what does his majesty desire to offer as the price of peace?" asked the old Cossack, his eyes glistening.

"That I can tell the Czar; no one else."

"Ask him, general, if he knows who the Ataman of the Cossacks is."

"I suppose he is a general," was the answer, when the question was put into French.

"Tell him that the Ataman of the free Cossacks of the Don has a right to enter the presence of the Czar at any time, to sentence to death and to pardon criminals, and that he is the viceroy of the Czar in the Ukraine."

Then the old Cossack leaned back and watched with twinkling eyes the effect of his boasting announcement.

Gabriel only shrugged his shoulders.

"I was sent to the Czar, and if I cannot see him I can go back," he answered, a reply that seemed to stagger the old Ataman.

"Now," continued Gabriel firmly, "bind my eyes again, and send me back. In a week more you will be sorry for it."

"What does he say?" demanded Platoff.

When it was translated he said:

"Let him go on to see the Czar, general. It is as well, perhaps, for, to tell the truth, my fellows are getting anxious to go home, and if these French will leave Russia and go back in peace it may be well."

The pale-faced general looked at him with some contempt and replied:

"Keep to your own calling, Ataman, and you'll make no mistakes. You think the French terrible fellows. Don't you see that they begin to tremble?"

The Ataman looked puzzled.

"To tremble? But they have taken our holy city!"

The general shrugged his shoulders.

"You said you would let me manage this. I know the French better than you."

"But he will have to give up his letter," remonstrated the Ataman earnestly.

"The letter is of no importance. They were trying to gain time to retreat."

"To retreat!" echoed the Cossack. "But in that case, lord general, the Czar ought to see the letter. We don't want them to retreat just yet. Don't you see?"

Gabriel saw that some dispute was going on and longed to understand it, but it was put to a sudden termination here by the clatter of accouterments in the yard outside when the Ataman rose and hurried out, leaving Gabriel alone with the general.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CZAR.

It was evident to the young envoy that some person of distinction had arrived, for he heard the Russian officers roaring out orders, and the

clash of arms told that arms were being presented.

But cooped up in that dingy room, he could not tell even what troops were round him.

Not to exhibit any anxiety, he threw himself down on the settee and observed to the general, with a yawn:

"These Russians have no idea of the courtesies of warfare. I wonder that a man like you could take service with them. It must be very distasteful."

The strange general smiled slightly.

"Perhaps, and perhaps not. You must remember that I do not hold the same opinions as you."

Gabriel looked at him gravely.

"I hope not. For example, I hold that the proper place for a French soldier is under the French flag."

"I agree with you, but the French flag is white with three golden lilies on the field. When that waves over Paris you'll find me under it."

"Then you will never see Paris," retorted Gabriel, emphatically.

"On the contrary, I shall enter it as the ally of Russia, to replace Louis XVIII. on the throne of his fathers."

"It would be an honorable entry, sir, on the side of feudal tyranny, to replace the free choice of a nation."

"The choice of a nation! Bah, monsieur. You forget that when he proclaimed that he was emperor, the people were gagged and the prisons full of victims. You are a young man, monsieur, and don't remember as well as some others what took place ten years ago."

The pale features of the strange general were suffused by a faint tinge of color, and his eyes burned like live coals. He seemed to be angry for the first time. Gabriel looked at him keenly and wondered who he could be that spoke so warmly of events concerning which, he himself had but little exact information. So he said:

"Perhaps you were a prisoner then."

The stranger's eyes sparkled, but he compressed his lips and answered:

"No. I was dead. That is enough of myself. Now, to your mission. I know what is in your letter. This man who thinks he made himself, wishes to fool the Czar into granting an armistice. I warn you that he will not get it. More, you will retreat from Moscow and lose your army. If you wish to save your own life, resign your commission and take service with the Czar."

Gabriel started up angrily.

"How dare you make such an offer to me? By heavens, if I were not—"

"In my power, owing me your life," slowly interrupted the other.

"Well, yes; if it were not for that I would cast my glove in your face. As it is, if you are not a coward, you will cease to insult me, sir."

The general looked at him in a way that puzzled Gabriel. He could have sworn that a little admiration lurked in that glance, but the strange man answered coolly:

"Very well. You may need my protection some day, and be glad to enter the service of Russia. Never mind. You stopped one night at the house of the Princess Doktoroff, on the way; did you not?"

"Yes," said Gabriel, surprised, "but how did you know it?"

"The princess told me. Her nephew is on the ataman's staff. He brought you in, you know. Her husband is one of our best generals."

"And she is a Frenchwoman," remarked Gabriel, thoughtfully. "I wish I knew where I had seen her in Paris."

The general curled his lip.

"What need to ask? You'll never guess. But she takes an interest in you."

"In me, general?"

"Precisely, in you. Do you know, count, that one may have people who take a deep interest in one and never know them? You come of an Alsatian family."

"I do, if family it can be called of which I am the only living relic."

"Indeed! Where are the rest?"

"My father died on the field at Volney and my mother was killed by a shell."

"But your father had a relative in the army, more than one."

"You are mistaken. He had a sister of whom I never heard him speak save once."

"And what said he then?" asked the general, fixing his eyes on Gabriel's searchingly.

The young man hesitated.

"It is a family matter, and no one's concern. He was angry with her."

"And why?" pursued his inquisitor.

"I have said it is a family matter; and you are a stranger, sir."

The other gave him a short laugh.

"You are very cautious. But I know what was said. I will see you on it at some other time. I fancy you are a lucky man, Count Gabriel, for here comes his majesty himself."

As he spoke the door was thrown open and into the room stepped a tall figure that Gabriel recognized at once as the Emperor of Russia, in the full uniform of a field marshal.

He rose and bowed low, and the Czar said to him, kindly:

"I understand you have a letter for me from my brother, the Emperor of the French. I will receive it."

Gabriel delivered it without more ado, and the Czar read it quietly. When he had finished he said to Gabriel:

"It is too late."

"Too late, sire?"

"Too late. Had this note come before the occupation of Moscow, I could have treated with the Emperor Napoleon; but now honor requires that I retrieve the disasters of the summer by the triumphs of the winter. I have taken counsel with my best generals, and we are all agreed that we can give no armistice. If his majesty wishes to leave Russia, he can do so; but I warn him he must leave his army behind him, either dead men or prisoners."

Gabriel stood astounded at the firm and menacing language of the Czar, and could only ask him:

"Is that your ultimatum, sire?"

"To the Emperor Napoleon, yes. We met at Tilsit, and I have a sincere liking for his majesty; but our interests cannot be identified any longer. But for you, Monsieur le Comte," he added, kindly, "I have a liking. Where have I seen you before?"

"On the Niemen at Tilsit, sire, I believe. I commanded the escort that day."

"Yes, yes, I remember. Those grim black cuirassiers that cut up my poor Cossacks so badly. A fine regiment, count, a fine regiment. Pity that they are about to be destroyed."

Gabriel drew himself up.

"If they are destroyed, sire, it will not be by the Cossacks unless they are ten to one."

The emperor smiled good-naturedly.

"We will not quarrel over it. But I feel an interest in you, for certain reasons. When you are a prisoner, if you will send word to me that you wish to see me, I will see you. You understand? I shall have an offer then to make to you."

Gabriel bowed.

"If I am unfortunate enough to be taken, sire, I will remember it; but I have already informed this gentleman here, that I can never enter the Russian service while Russia and France are at war with each other."

"No one has asked you, count," dryly replied the Czar. "But it is time you were riding back. General," to the pale officer, "ride back with him through the camps. Let him see everything. I fear no news he can take away."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST DAYS IN MOSCOW.

THEY rode back together, the boy general and the pale, inscrutable stranger, through the midst of Russian regiments of infantry, brown, dusty and ragged, long trains of guns, hordes of Cossacks and regiments of big, heavy dragoons and cuirassiers, that amazed Gabriel.

"The horses are in good condition," he observed, thoughtfully, as he passed a battery with eight animals to each gun.

The general shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you have? Do you expect them to starve in their own country, if they have time to eat the forage before it is burnt? Your men cannot get it."

Gabriel said no more, but he felt the full force of the implication, and he saw that the well-fed Russian army was in numbers much larger than he had supposed possible, after the losses of the campaign.

So he rode silently on to the outposts, where he found Casse Tete smoking a sociable pipe with the Cossacks, and there he took leave of the strange general, who touched his hat coldly and rode away with the Cossacks.

Then they plucked up the white flag, and Count Gabriel rode slowly back to Moscow, followed by Casse Tete, both men very silent and thoughtful.

Contrary to his usual custom, the orderly said not a word during the whole journey, till they had passed the pickets and were nearing the walls of Moscow.

Then he coughed slightly to attract his master's attention, and Gabriel said:

"Well, Casse Tete, what is it?"

He knew that his follower wished to say something and wanted encouragement.

Casse Tete cleared his throat again.

"Ahem! My general, did you know who was with you when you came back to the outposts?"

"No. That is, I know he is French, but that is all. Do you know?"

His question was eagerly put.

Casse Tete shook his head.

"No, my general, I do not. But if it were not that I know he blew his brains out or hung himself, or something of that sort, I would swear that I did know him."

"Know whom? You are talking nonsense. That is no dead man, and no ghost. He is as much alive as you or I."

Casse Tete compressed his lips, but made no reply; and Gabriel continued:

"Whom was he like, Casse Tete?"

The old soldier evaded the point.

"It is not for me to say, my general; but it is a singular thing that there should be two of them."

"Two of what, Casse Tete? Speak out."

"Two dead men come to life again."

"Two dead men? And who is the other?"

"That Russian sergeant, my general. I once served with that man in the army of the Sambre and Meuse, in '93."

"You did? What was he then?"

"He was simply private Basil Bontard, of the 47th demi-brigade, my general, and we went into Holland under General Pichegru, and took the fleet of the Hollanders with a charge of cavalry."

"Cavalry? I thought you said you were in the infantry, Casse Tete?"

"Basil Bontard was, my general, not I, and we got acquainted on the march, when I was orderly at brigade headquarters. Finally he exchanged into the cavalry, and we were together when we took the fleet."

"How did you do that? I've heard of it, but only as a joke."

"It was no joke, my general, I assure you. It was winter time, and there was the fleet, fast frozen up in the Texel. So we rode out over the ice in the night, and took them all, so they could not help themselves a bit. It was in all the papers at the time. And this Bontard, he afterward deserted, at the time the Chouans were so prosperous and when the emperor was in Egypt. And he tells me he went into the Russian service in Italy, when their General Suwarrow was there, and that he has a wife and a farm and a herd of cattle among the Cossacks. And he was actually trying to induce me to say I would come with him, my general. If we had not been under a flag of truce, I believe I should have given him a good blow, to teach him manners."

"And what made you think he was dead, Casse Tete? You said you thought him another dead man."

"Oh, that is true, my general. I was told that he had been killed in Italy in one of the battles there; but it turns out to be the very one in which he deserted. He was always a deep fellow, that Bontard."

"And who was the other man that you thought dead? Was he too killed in battle on the reports, and alive again in reality—or is it all a story you have invented?"

Casse Tete began to cough again, as if hesitating what to say, when they heard the bells of Moscow ring furiously out, and saw another dense column of smoke rise from the midst of the city.

"Ah! the accursed pirates!" cried the old cuirassier, vindictively. "See, my general, they are at it again."

And indeed they were, for not only one, but three distinct columns of smoke, all dense and black, rose up while they were looking, and they forgot all about their conversation while they listened to the clanging of the bells and the shouts of the excited soldiers as they rushed through the streets to extinguish the fire.

Gabriel and his orderly rode hurriedly in, and found the whole town in an uproar.

It was the sixth fire that day, and yet they had already, while he was gone on his expedition to the Czar's quarters, shot and hung a dozen Russians caught in the act of piling combustibles in cellars.

The fires were put out at last, but not before several houses were destroyed, and Gabriel caught sight of the emperor in his gray overcoat, followed by his staff, riding back from the ruins, giving orders as he went.

The Man of Destiny saw him as he saluted, and beckoned to him to come up. Then they rode slowly on to the Kremlin, and Gabriel noticed that the face of the emperor wore a set, anxious look, such as he had never seen on it before.

For a long time he said nothing, though his eyes were everywhere; but at last he broke out impatiently:

"Well, well, what did he say? Speak out. Did they deny you access to the Czar? Tell me the story."

"They denied me to see the Czar, sire, and took me to Platoff, Ataman of the Cossacks."

"Indeed? Platoff, eh? What sort of a man is he, count?"

"A rough Cossack, sire; but he has a tutor in a French renegade, whose name I do not know, but whom I strongly suspect to be the same who played The Man in Red to deceive your majesty."

The emperor frowned deeply.

"Indeed? Come, this grows interesting. Does he think he can play the game of war with me?" he muttered, under his breath.

Then, after a little, he went on:

"Then you only saw Platoff?"

"No, sire, the Czar came in while I was there."

"You are sure it was he?" asked the emperor eagerly. "Do you know him?"

"I saw him at Tilsit, sire. It was the same."

"Then he cannot be more than—"

"About fifteen miles off, sire. I rode fast there and back."

"Then—"

The emperor looked around him. The streets were full of soldiers, many of them drunk, others carrying bundles of their plunder out of houses, while the officers did not seem to care what was going on. The discipline of the Grand Army had become much relaxed on the road to Moscow.

He shrugged his shoulders muttering:

"With the men of Austerlitz I might make a dash; but with this rabble—bah!"

Gabriel saw what was in his mind—a sudden advance to defeat the Russians and capture the Czar—but, as the emperor said, the army was in no condition to take the field in a hurry.

The men and officers were all overloaded with plunder and every colonel had a carriage and horses to drag along with him on the march.

The dark battalions of the Old Guard were the only thoroughly disciplined bodies remaining in the Grand Army.

So the emperor resumed his questions in the irritable manner that showed the strain upon his mind.

"So you saw the Czar?" well, well, are you dumb that you cannot tell what he said? Did you give him my letter?"

"I did, sire, and he read it."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He refused an armistice, sire, and told me that your majesty might have Moscow, but that he warned you he would keep on fighting you."

The emperor's face never changed a muscle as he heard the news, and he rode on for some minutes in silence.

At last, as they were coming to the Kremlin he inquired:

"Did you see the troops?"

"Yes, sire. They number nearly as many as we do, but their horses are fat and the men well fed. Their artillery has eight horses to a gun."

The emperor nodded.

"Thank you. You have done well. I am pleased with you, count."

It was the first time Gabriel had ever heard words of unstinted praise from the first man in Europe. Usually it was only by the absence of rebuke that one could tell the emperor was pleased with anything.

He dismounted at the gates of the palace and said to the aide who met him:

"Send out an order to the marshals. I wish to see them all at once in two hours from now."

To Gabriel he said:

"Get your corps ready to move. You will have to cover—"

He did not say what they were to cover but his hearer knew what he meant:

The retreat from Moscow!

CHAPTER XXII.

CONFIDENCES.

THAT night the emperor was closeted late with the marshals who came out with grave faces; and the rumor spread with alarming rapidity through the city that the army was going to retreat.

Count Gabriel of Friedland in his own quarters had been up late attending to the details of getting his command ready, to move and when he had dismissed the last officer he was summoned by a message to the Kremlin.

His majesty wished to see him.

The count ordered his horse and rode over with Casse Tete.

He found the court-yard of the palace occupied by a battalion of the Old Guard, sleeping on their arms and had noticed on his way that the streets were full of troops lying about on the sidewalks.

But the city was quiet and there were no more fires.

On his way he passed the bodies of nearly twenty unhappy Russian peasants dangling from beams of wood or street lamps swung on chains and he knew they had been caught at acts of incendiarism.

He found the emperor alone in a large chamber in a wing of the old palace with Roustan the Mameluke sleeping in an anteroom. His majesty looked the same as usual now, calm and confident and was pacing the room with his hands behind his back in his favorite attitude of thought.

He nodded to Gabriel and said:

"Sit down, count."

Then he continued his walk for some minutes till at last he began:

"We are going to retreat, and I have given the Prince of the Moskwa the command of the rear guard. You are to go with him. It is the post of honor and danger. They will give you your orders to-morrow and the movement will commence inside of the week. How many men have you fit for service?"

"Twelve thousand, sire, but only three whose horses will last the retreat."

The emperor twitched the corner of his mouth nervously and looked haggard.

"How many men are fit to go for a week? I mean how many horses?"

"About five thousand, sire."

"Then you have four thousand men dismounted?"

"Yes, sire."

"Tell the quartermaster to issue muskets to them. They will have to act as infantry for awhile."

"Yes, sire."

"Issue muskets also to those who will stay mounted for a week."

"Yes, sire."

"Keep your good horses together and collect all the forage you can."

"Yes, sire."

"Don't charge the Cossacks unless they come within a hundred yards. We cannot afford to waste work in trying to catch them."

"Very good, sire."

Then the emperor recommenced his nervous walk and at last broke out:

"After all we have been as badly off—that is I have— You were not in Italy in '96, count, were you?"

"No, sire, I was a boy then."

"Yes, yes, I remember. Well, I was then worse off. I had but fifty thousand men, hardly any cavalry, the city of Mantua to besiege and a hundred thousand Austrians were coming to crush me. But I beat them. We shall get out of Russia, count."

"I am confident of it, sire."

The emperor smiled. The remark seemed to please him.

"Yes, we shall get out of Russia. But I am displeased with the marshals. The king of Naples is already talking of going home. Homel the imbecile! He could not keep his throne six months if I were not in the Tuileries. Count, I am sick of ingratitude. They owe all to me and they begin already to talk about going home. These men that I have made princes and dukes are thinking of how to make their own peace and keep their titles. Already! what will it be a year hence, when this army is destroyed?"

Gabriel was amazed. He had never yet heard the emperor speak so frankly to him. He seemed unconscious that he was speaking, but was merely uttering his thoughts aloud.

The young general ventured to say:

"There are faithful men left, sire. I, for one, will never desert you."

The emperor smiled again, and he had a rare and beautiful smile.

"I do not think you would. But tell me. You said that you saw to-day that man who annoyed us before. Wagram and at Fontainebleau. Do you know who he is?"

"No, sire, except that he is French and a Royalist."

"You are sure you do not know?"

Gabriel saw with surprise that the emperor looked suspiciously at him and answered:

"Certainly, sire. I have not the least suspicion."

"That is well. I fancied that he had told you some lies about me. He bears a strong resemblance to a man who hung himself in prison at the time of the execution of the Duke of Enghien. He is an impostor and trades on the likeness. Believe nothing he says."

"Certainly not, sire. I must observe, however, that he seems to be in high favor with the Czar for I found him at Prince Platoff's headquarters and he wore a general's uniform."

"Ay, ay," hastily replied the emperor. "I will not deny he is a good soldier. He was with me at Brienne and was an officer several years before I graduated. He was afterward cashiered for peculation, and in revenge turned against the republic. He trades on his likeness to—"

The emperor stopped short.

"Never mind, now. If ever you see him again, shoot him down."

Gabriel started.

"Sire, shoot him?"

"I said so. I give you the order."

And the emperor's voice had a hard, pitiless accent that made the young general shudder.

He turned pale, and said:

"Sire, I must tell you something. I owe that man my life. We once fought, and he overcame me. If there is to be shooting, he has the right to take my life, which he spared."

The emperor frowned angrily.

"What is all this? Where did this happen?"

"At Fontainebleau, sire. I discovered a series of secret passages and found him in a place I cannot name without forfeiting my honor. He gave me my life on condition that I kept the secret, promising never to use it to hurt your majesty."

The emperor looked as black as a thundercloud, and his voice sounded like the growl of distant thunder as he said to Gabriel:

"I am sorry to hear it. I thought you a man. I find you only a child. You can go, sir. Marshal Ney, Prince of the Moskwa, will give you your orders."

Gabriel, deeply mortified, bowed low and left the room.

Roustan started up as he crossed the ante-room, and half drew his saber; but, as soon as he saw who it was, the Mameluke said:

"Excuse, count. Good-night."

Gabriel passed out into the hall, and was in

the act of descending the stairs, when he heard a pistol-shot in the emperor's room, and the voice of his chief calling:

"Roustan! here!"

Without a moment's hesitation the young general rushed back, and there stood, facing the emperor, *The Man in Red!*

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST VISIT OF THE MAN IN RED.

THERE was no question about it. The Man in Red—tall, thin, in close scarlet garments—stood there, smiling sardonically on the emperor, who held in his hand a smoking pistol, which he had just fired, while Roustan, his dark face blue with fear, had drawn his saber, and seemed as if hesitating to advance and not daring to do so.

The emperor turned at the sound of Gabriel's step and pointed to The Man in Red, saying, imperiously:

"Arrest that man."

Gabriel drew his sword and advanced firmly on The Man in Red, who said not a word.

"You are my prisoner," said the young man, and as he spoke he reached out to grasp the other. He saw that it was not the general of whom he had known. The face was different. Besides, the general was clean shaven, and this man wore a long pointed mustache and chin tuft.

There was but a single lamp in the room at the time, and The Man in Red stood beside it.

And then, just as Gabriel thought he had grasped the other, the lamp went out, the room became dark, the young general found empty air before him, and Roustan cried out:

"Allah Akbar! It is Elbisi!"

For, even while the darkness was deepest, they saw a bluish glow in a spot on the further wall of the room, thirty feet away, and there stood The Man in Red again, smiling at them in the same evil fashion.

As for Roustan, the Mameluke was completely unnerved, and even Gabriel couldn't help a certain shudder, but the emperor cried fiercely:

"Enough of this mummery. You have come. What do you want?"

The bluish light illuminated that marble face, and Gabriel could see that it was full of anger and grim impatience.

Then they heard a voice from the center of the apparition in the wall speak out:

"I have come, as I said I would. Thy star has passed the zenith. From this day it will wane to the sunset. I have come to warn thee. Restore the King of France, and thou mayest yet die with honor."

The emperor laughed scornfully.

"When I was General Bonaparte I refused the offer. The Emperor of the French knows no King of France. If thou hast nothing more to say, go, or I call the guard."

The apparition laughed in answer, and his laugh seemed an echo of the other.

"I defy you. You defy me. Hitherto you have conquered. Now it is my turn. I know your tactics. You do not know mine yet; but you shall feel them in France."

The light faded away, and all was dark again, when Gabriel said to himself, half-aloud:

"Who can this be?"

Low as the words were spoken, an answer came back from the darkness:

"Look and see."

Then the light burst out again, and Gabriel beheld a tall, thin man in the uniform of twenty years before, when the generals of the republic wore long hair, clubbed in cues, huge three-cornered hats, voluminous neck-cloths and tri-colored sashes, over blue coats turned up with red.

The face was the face of the general he had known, but the quaint old-fashioned costume altered it entirely.

Yet it was this figure, real or pictured, that spoke out:

"You do not know me; he does. Bonaparte, remember me amid the ashes of the Brienne, where once we walked together. Farewell. Thou shalt see me once more."

"When?" asked the emperor, firmly.

"On the day of thy death," was the solemn answer.

Then the light faded away again, and all was still.

The emperor struck a light from the tinder-box on the table, and lit the lamp, which they found overturned, but not empty, on the table.

"Call in Duroc," he said, sharply, to the young general. "There are secret passages here. We can find them out yet, and catch this mountebank. Did you recognize the likeness?"

He still looked suspiciously at Gabriel, and the latter innocently replied:

"How could I, sire, when I never saw a general officer in those days but Moreau and Hoche?"

"And have you seen no portraits?" asked the emperor. "Come, you must have a suspicion whom he is trying to personate. The likeness is very strong, I admit."

"Indeed, no, sire."

"Then call Duroc."

Gabriel noticed that the tones of his voice had an accent of relief as he gave the order, and wondered more than ever who this mysterious

man could be, who was evidently known to the emperor.

He summoned Duroc, and a strict search was made for the secret passages, resulting in the discovery of a door hung with tapestry on the spot where they had seen the apparition.

But before they could search further the walls shook under a fearful explosion in the palace at the other wing, and again rose the terrible cry they had heard so often of late:

"Fire! fire! fire!"

At the same minute a broad red glare shone in at the windows, and they could see the flames leaping out of the lower part of the palace, the wind blowing them straight toward the emperor, while the soldiers in the court-yard had jumped up and were staring at the spectacle as if paralyzed.

The emperor uttered a curse below his breath, the first emotion Gabriel had ever seen him show, but in a moment he was cool again and snatched up his hat from the table.

"Order the alarm beaten, Duroc," he cried.

"Get the troops under arms. These savages are burning their own palace to drive us out! Oh, if it were only July!"

They rushed from the palace and not a moment too soon.

Officers and men, camp followers and all the rabble that follows an army came pouring out from the Kremlin and reported the whole place in flames no one knew how.

The strong odor of burning pitch and tar showed how the conflagration had spread so rapidly and even while they looked the whole mass of the huge building was wrapped in flames, casting a glare over the city of Moscow and showing the streets full of troops silent and orderly enough now under the pressure of this unknown terror against which no one could guard.

The emperor mounted his horse and rode through the streets followed by his numerous staff to encourage the troops but the shouts of "Vive l'Empereur" were few and faint. Even the soldiers realized that his star was waning.

They had fought hard for months and this was their reward: a barren victory and a heap of ashes.

All that long night no one in Moscow had any rest, and the flames continued to spread. The Kremlin burnt so fiercely that no attempt was made to save it, but fires kept bursting out in fresh quarters all over the city and no one could find out how they began.

There would be heard an explosion in a cellar where no one had been seen for days and the whole house would blaze up in a way that showed it must have been prepared beforehand.

The burning of the Kremlin seemed to be the signal for that of Moscow.

Hurriedly the baggage-wagons and artillery were ordered out of the city and the rumbling of the long trains sounded like thunder as they went; while the roar of the flames, the hoarse voices of officers giving orders, the shouts of the excited men in all the languages of the Empire, made a Babel of confusion.

And in the midst of all this came a great explosion among the burning ruins of the Kremlin, as the flames reached a secret magazine of powder, and the soldiers in the streets started a panic and began to run for the gates, shouting "Sauve qui peut!"

In the midst of this wild stampede Gabriel, Count of Friedland, looked with pride on his own division of cuirassiers.

They had bivouacked in a square near the Kremlin, and stood patiently by their horses, the red glare lighting up their brazen helmets and bright cuirasses, like so many statues, waiting orders. And they had a long time to wait, for it became impossible to check the unreasoning panic that seized the soldiers before morning dawned, and when the daylight came the once flourishing city of Moscow was a waste of smoking ruins, with here and there a blackened house standing up like a blasted tree, tottering to its fall, while the camp-followers alone roamed through the streets, picking up anything that they could find and searching eagerly for the articles of jewelry which they knew had abounded in Moscow before it was taken, and most of which the soldiers had packed into their knapsacks.

And not till then did an order come to Gabriel, in the shape of an aide-de-camp:

"The prince of Moskwa's compliments, and he wishes you to take out your division to support the pickets. The Russians are advancing again. You are to cover the rear guard."

The retreat from Moscow had begun at last.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ENVOY.

THREE months have passed away and the relics of the Grand Army are collected on Prussian soil.

Of all the proud host of cavalry that entered Russia in 1812, only one regiment remains intact, diminished to three slender squadrons, but as firm as ever—the grim old Death's Head Cuirassiers. The rest are scattered to the four winds, part dead, part in hospitals, part in Russian prisons.

The eagles have taken their last flight to the

east, and the relics of the Grand Army, with crowds of new conscripts from France, are falling back toward their native land, defeat following defeat, only fighting to secure a retreat, if by so doing they could save their honor. For twelve years no enemy had crossed the soil of France, now the English are in Toulouse.

For six years the Prussians have been trodden under foot, now they have joined the Russians. The flag of France still waves over Berlin, but how long will it wave there? The Russians, flushed with triumph, are advancing to drive the emperor behind the Elbe.

In the midst of this war of giants, a traveling carriage, with a tall, grim-looking cuirassier on the box, is driving rapidly through the passes of the Bohemian Mountains, and nearing Vienna.

In the carriage sits a handsome man, still young and fresh looking, in the uniform of a French general, and as they pass object after object on the roads, he sighs and murmurs to himself:

"How different now."

The old cuirassier on the box looks at things in another way.

He is a philosopher and smokes a short, black pipe, conducive to a placid frame of mind.

As the carriage changes horses at Pratzen, he descends and asks:

"Is there anything I can do for you, my general?"

"No, Casse Tete," says the general, with a sigh. "I need nothing. Do you notice where we are?"

"Truly, yes, my general. This is the place we gave the Russians their milk, only seven years ago."

"And now the tables are turned."

"A trifle, my general, a trifle. We shall drive them back yet. One cannot always have luck; but we can beat any of them single-handed."

"That's it, Casse Tete. Ask the postmaster how long it takes to Vienna."

"Three hours, gracious herr," says the official, respectfully, and away goes the carriage again, past the old battle-field of Austerlitz, and so on till it rolls over the long bridge at Vienna and rumbles through the streets to the French embassy. There Count Gabriel of Friedland gets out and is closeted with the ambassador for a long time, while Casse Tete waits patiently in the ante-room.

At last the door opens and Casse Tete catches the last words:

"No one knows who he is, but we are certain he is a Russian emissary, and he has the emperor's ear all the time. You'll see him to-night at the ball."

"And I cannot procure an interview till to-morrow?" says Gabriel, sadly.

"I fear not. Even that is doubtful. Things are changed, count. I will send in the request at once, however."

Gabriel thanked him, and they depart to a suit of rooms that has been prepared for the special envoy from the Emperor Napoleon.

Casse Tete bustles about to make his chief comfortable, and tries to cheer him up, but Gabriel is very gloomy still. At last the faithful orderly observes:

"It seems to me, my general, that you set too much store on little things."

"Little things, Casse Tete? Yes; but a feather will show the direction of the wind."

"The wind changes, my general, and I never knew it to blow long in one direction. Your honor has only to wait and it will be favorable."

The count shook his head.

"We cannot afford to wait. We are in a hurry. If we wait, our foes will move."

"So much the better, my general. It will save us the trouble of moving to find them. We shall fight our battles where we want them."

Casse Tete seemed determined to let nothing cast down his spirits, though, in truth, he felt as gloomy as his young master, so he continued briskly:

"What uniform will your honor wear at the ball to-night?"

"It matters little, Casse Tete."

"Pardon, my general; but it matters a great deal. If these Austrians see you looking gloomy and badly dressed, they will think we are in a bad way; but if you put on your best uniform and show yourself cheerful, they will think we are all right."

"You are right, Casse Tete. Put out the uniform of Master of the Horse. I will keep up a bold front."

Accordingly, that evening, when a grand ball was held in the palace, one of the most conspicuous figures on the floor was a tall, handsome, fair-haired man, in a picturesque Hussar uniform of blue and silver, and wearing the cross of the Legion of Honor on his breast. It was Count Gabriel of Friedland, and he attracted a good deal of attention among the gay Viennese, to whom he had been well known in the prosperous days of the empire.

Very soon he was surrounded by the young officers of the guard, asking him questions of how he had left the French army at Berlin, and

whether he thought the Russians would advance further than the Polish frontier.

"Not if the emperor can prevent it," he told them, "and his majesty has never failed to drive his enemies so far."

"How about the retreat from Moscow, count?" asked Count Waldstein, a young German officer, maliciously. "We heard that the Russians drove you pretty far in three months."

"Not one step," asseverated Gabriel. "They tried to stop us more than once and we cut our way out every time. Besides, we were not afraid of the Russians. It was the winter that hurt us."

"The Russian envoy doesn't say so," young Waldstein retorted. "By the by, have you seen him yet?"

"Seen whom?"

"General Grupisch, to be sure, the new special envoy. All the world is talking about him."

"Grupisch? No. But that is not a Russian name. Who is he?"

"A German, probably. You know there are a number of Germans in their army, and the Russians hate them, too, because they have more brains than themselves. But this Grupisch does not look like a German. He has more the aspect of a Frenchman."

"When did he come here?" asked Gabriel.

"Three days ago, and he seems to be a great favorite already. He has had two interviews with the emperor."

"There he is now," interrupted one of the young officers. "Look at the further end of the saloon, count. He is coming with the Kaiser."

Gabriel beheld amid the crowds that filled the great ball-room two gentlemen coming slowly forward engaged in conversation, and they appeared to be distinguished people from the way in which everybody made way from them, retiring respectfully.

He knew one of them well enough by his tall, dignified figure, silver hair and kindly face. It was the Emperor Francis Joseph.

The other was none other than the general about whom hung so much mystery. He was simply dressed in a dark green uniform, with very little lace on it, and appeared to be listening to what the Austrian emperor was saying.

Gabriel knew that in that man lay all his danger at the court of Vienna. The emperor's daughter was on the throne of France and Austria was still nominally the ally of Napoleon, but had withdrawn her forces to her own territory at the first disasters of the Moscow campaign.

He had come himself to Vienna to ask the active assistance of an Austrian contingent, and here he found a Russian emissary high in favor with the Kaiser.

His resolution was taken in a moment, and to him the ball-room became a field of battle in which he had an object to gain.

The Austrian officers fell away from his side as the emperor advanced, and he was left alone waiting.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have fallen back into the crowd himself, but the occasion was too pressing to admit of delicacy in asserting his own position.

He remained standing in the path of the advancing couple till Francis Joseph raised his eyes, when he bowed profoundly.

The emperor with his usual kindly smile said to him:

"The Count of Friedland I believe, is it not?"

"The same, sire, on a special mission to your majesty from the Emperor Napoleon."

The emperor's face grew colder as he said:

"Indeed? I thought you had an ambassador."

CHAPTER XXV.

A FEMALE DIPLOMAT.

"I thought you had an ambassador."

The words were discouraging, and the usual kindness of the Kaiser's face had changed to a look of severity.

But Gabriel had come prepared to meet coldness and to evade it. His former experience at the Court of Berlin in a trying crisis stood him in good stead here, so he answered with the most smiling grace:

"It is very true, sire, but his majesty desired to show special honor to his august father-in-law on this occasion and has sent me in addition to convey to your majesty his assurances of good will. Our minister the Duke of Palermo has had the honor I believe to communicate my arrival to your majesty and to ask an audience for to-morrow."

"Yes, yes," replied the Austrian, hastily. "He has sent word. You shall have it, sir. At noon, at noon. How did you leave his majesty the Emperor of the French?"

"Well in health, sire, and triumphant over any enemy who ventured to come close enough to feel our artillery."

"Very good. I'll see you to-morrow, count. Yes, yes; I'll see you. Good-evening."

And the emperor dismissed him with a cold nod and moved on, the Russian still by his side.

Gabriel noticed that this stranger had kept his eyes on the floor during their whole conversation, a lurking smile on his lip, and as

they moved away he heard him say to the emperor:

"Times are changed, sire; but nothing to what they will be in another year."

Then they passed on and Gabriel retired to a corner of the saloon, feeling more than ever doubtful of the success of his mission. He had secured an audience, which was something, but he could read rejection already in the Kaiser's glance.

Presently, while he was buried in gloomy thoughts he heard his name pronounced behind him, and turned to behold the face of a lady which seemed strangely familiar to him, but which he could not at the moment identify.

"My dear count," said the lady, gayly, "I see in your eye that you have not the least idea who I am, which is not flattering."

"Indeed," returned Gabriel, in the same spirit, "you are mistaken. I'm sure I recognize you perfectly, but—"

"But you don't know who I am. It is true, but then you have only seen me once in Russia, where you passed a night at my house without asking leave; but otherwise I am bound to admit behaved very well, far better than I had reason to expect."

"I know now, madame. I told you that I recognized you. It is the princess, Olga Doktoreff, I am sure."

"And yet, when you saw me then, you insisted you had seen me before."

"Yes; I remember; and it was in Paris, I am sure. But I cannot— Will you tell me if on the first occasion I saw you, a different costume was not—"

"My dear count, of course. Do you really suppose that a woman would wear the same costume all the time?"

"That is not it entirely. It must have been the surroundings—"

"Ah, now you are going into the secrets of the toilet, which no man can safely dare to penetrate. But tell me, how do you like Vienna now?"

She had slipped her arm into his with a quiet freedom that became her, and was taking him along in the stream of promenaders that circled round the room.

"How do you like Vienna?" she repeated, as he did not answer.

"I do not dislike it. It is a lovely place, and were it time of peace and I at home here, I might like it well," he answered, embarrassed, and not knowing how to get rid of her.

"And the emperor—you like him, of course? Every one adores Kaiser Joseph."

"Why, madame?"

"Because he is so good. I remember in the days before Wagram, when your people held Vienna and when the black eagle was but a beaten bird, the people wept for their Kaiser's hard fate and hated Napoleon worse than a Prussian."

"Were you in Vienna then?" he asked, in the hope of finding out something of this mysterious woman.

"I have been everywhere, count. But you are to have an audience to-morrow, I hear."

"Madame?"

"I heard it. No mystery about it. I was in the crowd when the emperor granted it. I know what you have come for; but you will not get it."

"How do you know it?"

"I know it. You have to secure the active support of Schwarzenberg's army, but it will not enter the quarrel on your side."

Gabriel listened to the confident tone in which she spoke, and retorted:

"You say that because you hope it; but you must remember that I am French, not Russian."

"And how do you know that the French do not hope the same as I?"

"No true Frenchman could desire the fall of the greatest man in France."

"He will fall, for all that, and France be happier for it. But come, count; I did not take your arm to quarrel with you. I told you once that if you would leave the service of this usurper I could procure you a better—"

"Pardon me," he interrupted, flushing deeply. "I do not like to be uncivil to a lady, but I must decline to listen to any proposition to betray my chief."

"I have not asked you to do it. I have merely told you—reminded you—"

"Of an offer that should never have been made to a soldier, madame."

"As you please."

The lady seemed nettled at his tone.

"Some day you will be sorry for it. I will trouble you to take me to my brother, count."

"With pleasure, if madame will indicate the person and the way to find him."

"You know him well enough. It is the man who owns your life."

Her tone had a sly, triumphant malice in it which surprised him, and her dark eyes rested on his with a meaning expression.

"I will not affect to misunderstand you," he said, slowly. "The gentleman of whom you speak is the bitter enemy of France, and I was foolish enough to place my life in his power. I will conduct you to him if you wish. I see him

yonder. He goes by the name of Grupisch here, I believe."

She smiled more complacently.

"I did not think you would admit it. You are a brave man, count, to acknowledge a defeat so freely."

"We will go there, if you please," he said, coldly; and he took her across the room to where he saw the mysterious general standing by himself, his back against the wall.

As they came near him, the princess said:

"I am going to introduce you. I want you to be friends, you two. It is strange what an interest I take in you."

"I am flattered, madame. I wish I could divine the cause."

"Some day you will. In the mean time—"

She touched the strange general on the arm, and said gayly:

"Why so thoughtful, *mon cher*. Here is the Count of Friedland, whom I have been for an hour trying to convert from the error of his ways, and he wishes to know you."

The general raised his dark magnetic eyes to those of Gabriel, and said slowly:

"We know each other already. Well, count, you see I told you the truth. You have left an army behind you in Russia. You will leave another in Germany."

"That remains to be seen," replied Gabriel, proudly. "For my part, I am tired of one thing, which is this restraint under which I am with regard to you, general. Will you see me to-morrow at some quiet place? I wish to terminate our dispute that began at Fontainebleau."

The stranger bowed coldly.

"I will see you at sunset on the bridge," he said.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MUTINY.

AT sunset of the next day Gabriel, Count of Friedland, looking gloomy, and as if he cared nothing what became of himself, walked onto the bridge across the Danube, and stood leaning against one of the parapets as if waiting for some one.

He had doffed his showy uniform and wore the simple black coat of a citizen, in which he had become merged into the crowds that thronged the streets of the city of Vienna.

He stood there, tapping his boot with a light cane and watching the stream of passengers, till he saw the tall form of General Grupisch coming toward him, likewise in civilian dress.

Then he stood up and saluted the other formally, a courtesy returned by the stranger with a curt nod as he passed him and indicated that he wished to walk on.

They crossed the bridge, and when they were at the other side, Grupisch observed brusquely:

"Well, what is it? You wished to speak to me, monsieur."

"I did. I am tired of seeing you on the other side and being unable to fight you. I propose that we resume our dispute where we left off at Fontainebleau."

"When my foot was on your chest, my sword at your throat, you mean?" said the general, sharply.

"Precisely," was the cool reply. "I can die if need be; but I cannot live longer like this. You are able to foil me at every turn."

The stranger uttered a short laugh as they struck out into the country on the other side the Danube.

"It is true, I foil you, is it not? What did the emperor say to you this morning?"

"That is my affair. Your question is not to the point."

"And needless besides. Shall I tell you the words he spoke?"

Gabriel looked at him steadily.

"If you can, you must have obtained your knowledge by eavesdropping."

"Nothing of the sort. I was in the very room where you saw the emperor. I am bound to admit you stated your case well. To hear you one would think this Bonaparte still the first man in Europe with every one for allies."

"Where were you?" asked Gabriel, amazedly.

"There was not a screen in the room."

"I require no screen, monsieur. I was in the room, within six feet of where you stood. I will tell you what the Kaiser said, if you doubt it."

"Tell me then."

"He told you that while he sympathized with the misfortunes of the Emperor Napoleon and loved him as a son-in-law, his duty to the empire was above that to his daughter, and that if the French were driven behind the Elbe, he would be compelled to join the coalition to prevent the invasion of his own territories by the Russian forces. That he would for the present remain neutral, but that your emperor could look for no help from the soldiers who had fought him at Austerlitz, Wagram and a hundred other battles within twenty years."

Gabriel bowed his head.

"You heard it all. If you were in the room you must have been there by the consent of the Emperor Joseph."

"You are certain in your reasoning. I was."

It was understood that I should be, to insure fair play for my master, the Czar Alexander."

"The office was a fitting one," retorted Gabriel bitterly. "A renegade should be a spy and an eavesdropper."

The face of the other darkened and his eyes glowed as they walked on, but he said nothing for some time, till at last he seemed to have succeeded in swallowing his passion.

His voice was rather husky then:

"You are trying to taunt me into killing you, I see. Have a care. I may do it."

"I have told you already I am willing to die," said Gabriel. "I should not have sought this interview but for that."

"But you are unarmed."

"You are not. You have a sword-cane in your hand now. Yonder is a wood that has plenty of solitary nooks. Let us go in there. Then we will take up the dispute where we left it and I will force you to kill me or be killed."

Grupisch shook his head.

"You propose an assassination. I could not commence a duel under such auspices."

"You must. I will force you."

Again the stranger seemed to have some difficulty in controlling his passion.

"You cannot force me to do anything. When I was in France in the midst of foes, you could not do it, how much less now, when you are surrounded by foes, I by friends. I will not fight you. Besides, you must be desperate to think of such a thing. Your chief will need all the soldiers he has to keep off his fall awhile longer."

"He will keep them off forever. I do not see what he has ever done to you, besides, that should turn you into the enemy of France. You once served I believe."

"Did I serve? Yes. And what was my reward from this jealous upstart?"

Gabriel noticed with surprise that the other seemed to be intensely irritated at the veiled insinuation conveyed in his own speech:

"You once served, I believe."

"Yes, I once served and won a greater name than he had in those days. You want to know what he has done to me. Well, young man, you shall hear, and when you have heard, then if you persist in demanding this fight I will gratify you. Come here."

He took Gabriel by the arm and they hurried into the woods till they came to a rustic seat in a lonely glade where no one was in sight within several hundred yards.

Then the stranger said to Gabriel:

"Sit down there and listen."

The young man took his seat and awaited the other's movements with some impatience and a great deal of curiosity. He thought that he was at last going to penetrate the mystery of this stranger, who came from no one knew where.

Meantime the strange general paced up and down before him in a rapid nervous manner as if much excited. He seemed to be angry and yet hesitating whether to speak or not. At last he stopped in front of Gabriel and began roughly:

"I don't know why I should tell you all this story except that you—never mind that. I have a reason for feeling an interest in you."

"What is it?" demanded Gabriel. "You have insinuated that and so has the French Princess Doktoroff who claims to be your sister. I do not want your interest. You are enemies to your country."

The stranger ground his teeth.

"It is false. We are enemies only to him who has destroyed France: I have done more for it in my day than ever he did. We love France better than he, for we have saved the lives of thousands of French soldiers from the lances of the Cossacks."

"Whom you led on?" interjected Gabriel.

"Be it so. I led them against the usurper. But let that pass. You wish to know what interest I take in you. Young man, the same blood runs in our veins. You are my kinsman."

Gabriel looked searchingly at him.

"Your kinsman?"

"I have said it."

"Then I am sorry for it, if it be true."

"Why?"

"Because you have disgraced the family. Is your real name Lenoir? I never heard of a Lenoir that fought against France. My father was a noble, but he died on the field defending the republic."

"My name is not Lenoir. What it is you will never know. You say your father died defending the Republic? I, too, fought for the Republic. That was France. But when the people tired of governing themselves there was but one course for me to take."

"And what was that?"

"To return to the line of St. Louis, not to take a foreigner to rule over them."

"That is a matter of opinion, general."

"It was. I held to the opinion experience had formed. France, under the king, was powerful and respected, acknowledged by all the world. The republic, too, was acknowledged. The empire has never yet been acknowledged."

"By England, you mean."

"It matters not. I held to the opinion that the king's right returned when the people failed to govern themselves. Do you know what was my reward for holding those opinions?"

Gabriel did not answer.

"I will tell you. That man, by his myrmidons under Fouché, undertook to kill me and blast my name forever and ever. Now I will tell you the story; then judge."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE EXILE'S STORY.

THE singular stranger began his story in a low, hurried voice, as if trying to keep down his excitement.

"You do not know who I am, but I knew you when you were a baby in arms, and I knew this man from Corsica when he first came to Brienne. I was a general before he was a captain, and I beat the Prussians and Hollanders before he was ever heard of. I never lost a battle. You think I am boasting, but it is true. Well, time went on; the Revolution had degenerated into the Reign of Terror. The rule of the people of France, the great people I served, had vanished. In its stead was the rule of the Paris mob. Then I became disgusted. I left the service and retired to a foreign land to live till Frenchmen regained their manhood. Then he had his chance. When he took command in Italy there was no republic. It was a Directory of five kings, who vied with each other in theft. Bonaparte was their tool and a fitting one. He made war like a brigand, and plundered Italy to enrich himself. Still I did not envy him. I had known him at Brienne, a boy of boundless egotism, with little to back it. Had I taken service against him, as I was pressed to do, he would never have won Lombardy and Venice. Well, I watched and waited for France to resume her reason. I was content. He was a thief, perhaps, but he won victories. Time passed on. He went to Egypt, and while he was gone, the people were all tired of the Directory, and wished to get back their old sovereign. I came to France and found them ripe for a change of government. They had tired of anarchy. Then came the news that he had lost a grand fleet for us, and that the French army was shut up in the East. But he was not shut up. No. He deserted his men, left them to the mercies of the English and Turks, and came home to do what? I ask you, young man, to do what?"

"To save France," replied Gabriel, promptly.

"To ruin her, you mean. To overturn the representatives of the people by the swords of his fellow-bandits, and to make himself—that boy whose ears I used to cuff at Brienne—to make himself the ruler of France. Well, I thought it was time to strike then, to find out if the people really wanted this upstart for a ruler. I came to Paris. I had a right to come there. I had made no war against France. But I was forced to come in disguise. It was at the time of the Jacobin plot of the infernal machine. I had nothing to do with it, but for all that Fouché found me out. I was arrested and thrown into prison. And then what think you was my fate?"

"I do not know. Probably exiled to Cayenne," replied Gabriel. "I was in the ranks at the time, and heard but little of the plot, but I understood some were executed, others exiled, while one or two committed suicide in prison."

The general's eyes flashed.

"Suicide indeed! Murder you mean. Listen. I was confined in a dark dungeon, refused a lawyer, refused anything, refused even a copy of the charge against me. I asked for it again and again. I knew I had done nothing against even his upstart rule. I was a Frenchman visiting Paris; that was all. One morning I heard that they were trying Moreau, and that the people cheered him as he went to court. Then I said to myself, 'Moreau is Bonaparte's rival. He will get rid of him. I am another. If I come into the streets they will cheer me. He will never forgive that. I scent danger.' The next day at dawn I was assaulted in my dungeon by four men. I killed two with my bare hands, monsieur, my bare hands; but the others caught me from behind, and I was choked into perfect insensibility. They thought me dead and left me, chuckling, no doubt. When I came to myself I was in a coffin, in the receiving vault of Pere la Chaise, with moldering bodies around me."

Gabriel shuddered slightly.

"Ugh! A battle-field is one thing, but a charnel house is ugly."

The stranger looked grimly at him.

"Do you think so? Do you know what it is to wake up in the darkness, to smell the bodies all round you, and to be screwed down into a box so close that you are smothering anew? To feel alive and fully conscious to everything, and yet to be unable to stir a finger? To have a ton of lead on your chest, your limbs bound in fetters of brass, while you cannot even groan, for something like a wad of cotton in your throat? Well, that was my position on that night of torture. My only occupation to lie and think, and think, and think, till it seemed as if I must go mad. I tell you, young man, it was in that night I first learned what hate was and that I swore to myself that if I ever got out of that

hell-hole alive I would not rest till I had rid France of the scourge that afflicted her, playing the pranks of a king with the manners of a grocer."

He stopped to wipe his forehead, and Gabriel asked him then:

"And how did you escape at last?"

"Nature aided me. The agony in which I was burst out of my forehead in a bloody sweat, and I was able to move. I braced my knees against the lid of the coffin and forced it out easily, for it only had four light screws, and then I knew I was saved. I was still dressed as I had been, and I remembered that I had a tinder-box in my pocket. I struck a light, found where I was, and had the pleasure of reading my own coffin plate. It was then that the idea struck me that henceforth I was safe in France. My death established, I might walk past the police with no other danger than that of being remarked on as a very striking likeness, if I could only procure the burial of that coffin."

"And how did you do it?"

"Easily enough. I weighted the coffin with earth and stones, put back the lid and all was safe there."

"But how did you get out of the vault?"

"Waited till the morning, when it was opened by the men coming for my own funeral, and then I hid away behind some coffins and came out to mingle with the crowd."

"But did no one recognize you?"

"How could they? I was unknown, save in the Republican uniform, as you saw me at Moscow—"

"Then it was you we saw? How did you manage that deception?"

"It is not so difficult in these days. Never mind how I did it. It was done. I listened to my own funeral service, and heard the people speak of me. It is an experience that does not fall to every man. Since then I have kept my secret. But since then also, I have begun my revenge on the man who murdered my name and left me, before the people of France, in the light of a traitor, too cowardly to meet his fate. Do you know what the *Moniteur* said about me?"

"I have heard of it, but I never read it, nor knew to whom it referred."

"Others have, and I am cursed with the name which will go down to history as a suicide."

"Then why not announce yourself now and belie the report?"

"Who would believe it? I should be styled an impostor, trading on a resemblance. He has willed that I should be dead. Very well. To the world I will be dead. But he knows better. He knows who I am and dare not reveal it. To do so would be to seal his own shame. He knows that his own agents strangled me, and he thought I was dead till he found I was alive, when I saw him in Moscow. For seven years I have haunted him and defied his power to find me. Now my turn has come. It is too late for him even to search my grave. When he reaches France it will be as a man without power, surrounded by enemies, and my triumph lies in the fact that he knows I am the brains of the coalition against him."

There was a singular air of exaltation about this singular man, as he thus spoke, that caused a sudden suspicion to creep through the mind of the young general. He began to suspect the sanity of his companion, and to see in him a monomaniac.

Whether he wore, or not, it was plain to Gabriel that the man had suffered a great wrong at the hands of the emperor, and that he could hardly pursue his quarrel with honor to himself.

The stranger ceased his story and began to pace up and down again, like a wild beast in a cage, till he stopped and said roughly:

"Well, you have heard. Do you still wish to compel me to fight you?"

"You have told me that you are my kinsman, general, and that bars our quarrel any further."

"Good. Some day, when the lilies wave over France, I will tell you who I am. Till then, be silent on what I have said. You may yet have reason to thank the fates that made me a relative."

"And the princess. Does she know?"

"The princess is my sister."

"Will you tell me where I saw her in France? I am sure I did."

"I will. She was in Paris as my agent and that of our people, under the name of Camille Lenormand."

"Camille Lenormand?"

And Gabriel's mind went back like a flash to the night, three years before, when he and the emperor had made their pilgrimage in the Faubourg St. Antoine, and had stumbled on the fortune-teller's house. How absurd her predictions had seemed to him then, and how different they seemed now. He was recalled from his reverie by the voice of the general, who said:

"I am going to bid you farewell. I leave Vienna to-night. When you see the usurper, tell him you saw me and watch his face. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

THE autumn leaves were falling in the grand old forest of Fontainebleau, that year, when a lady, walking in the garden of the palace and watching a child at play, looked up at the sound of horses' hoofs and uttered a scream of surprise and joy as she recognized the figures of two riders.

The foremost wore a general's uniform and rode a black horse, the other was a cuirassier, his orderly.

The lady screamed out:

"Oh, Gabriel, look, look, it is papa at last! Oh, *mon Dieu!*"

And then, like a regular woman, she turned faint and would have fallen had not her husband leaped off his horse and run up to support her.

As for the child, a sturdy boy of five, he stood staring at the two men as if he had never seen them before, and the grim old cuirassier threw up his hands in astonishment, crying:

"Is it possible? The little count has not forgotten old Casse Tete surely."

And then the youngster stared at him harder than ever, and finally ran to him, screaming:

"Casse Tete, Casse Tete, put me on the horse, put me on the horse!"

The old soldier was delighted. He caught up the boy in his arms and hugged him violently, while something very like a tear stole down his scarred old cheeks, and his voice resembled that of a raven as he muttered:

"The little count knows me? He is the general over again! Eh, *mon Dieu*, how he has grown and what curls!"

It was pretty to see the contrast between the happy child, with his bright curls, and the scarred and wrinkled face of the rugged old cuirassier, and to note the perfect love, harmony and confidence that existed between them, as soon as the child recognized him. He pulled the long white mustache and put his little hands up to pat the rough old cheek, and never so much as noticed his father all the time, so wrapped up was he in his old dry nurse and horse, the ancient Casse Tete.

"And where hast thou been all this time?" he prattled on. "I've had no one to give me rides since thou went away, Casse Tete; for mamma, she cries, and cries, and I don't have any fun any more. Oh how long it has been! Put me on the horse, Casse Tete."

The veteran obeyed muttering:

"Ay, ay, how long! nearly two years now."

And so it was. The day that Gabriel and Casse Tete left Fontainebleau, in the early spring of 1812 was their last adieu to home for eighteen months, and now it was late October of the next year.

And little Gabriel had nearly forgotten his father and Casse Tete in that long absence. But with the true happy selfishness of a child he only thought of his own little pleasures now and was so taken up with the horses and their glittering trappings that he paid no heed to father or mother, till he heard a voice saying:

"And has Gabriel forgotten papa?"

Then he looked up and saw his mother still weeping hysterically for joy on the breast of her tall, handsome husband, and little Gabriel nodded consequently and replied:

"No, papa, I have not forgotten, but you see I have to manage this horse, and I can't be bothered kissing anybody."

This little saucy speech caused Casse Tete to double up with admiration as he said to his master:

"Is it not wonderful, my general? Such a spirit! Such a flow of language. Ah, he was born to be a colonel of cuirassiers. The Death's Heads can never refuse him. See how he has picked up the curb reins. Ho! Cosaque, ho!"

For the big black horse feeling the tiny strength of the child on the curb bit was backing into a flower bed and in danger of rearing, so that the end of it was that Master Gabriel had to give up the reins and be content with the saddle for a perch, from which he graciously kissed papa and told him:

"I am glad you have come back; for it is so stupid to have a mamma that does nothing but cry all the time."

"And does mamma cry all the time?" asked Gabriel, fondly stroking the raven hair of his beautiful young wife.

"Always, papa, always, and then she reads the papers, and they make her cry more. Tell me, papa, is the emperor a butcher now; does he keep a shop?"

"What makes you ask that, my child?" said his father, curiously.

"Because Madame St. Jean was saying to mamma the other day that he was only a butcher after all, who was up to his knees in blood."

"Hush! Gabriel," said the mother, with an anxious glance at her husband, on whose face a shadow had fallen, "hush. Little boys should not talk so much."

"But you know she said so," persisted the child, "and you got angry with her. And I made up my mind to ask papa when he came home if it was true. Does the emperor keep a butcher shop, papa?"

"No, my child, no," answered Gabriel, hastily. "Madame was only joking. Come into the house, Inez. Alas, we have not very long to be together."

She turned pale.

"What! are you going away again?"

And Gabriel set up a shout:

"You sha'n't go, you sha'n't. I won't have it. All the other children have papas, and I want one too!"

"See, my little count," interposed Casse Tete, dexterously, "Cosaque wants to go to the stable. Shall we not go?" I will show you how to take off a saddle and we'll feed the horses."

So Gabriel the less was comforted and forgot everything else in the superior interest of the horses, while Gabriel senior walked to the house, his arm round his wife.

She had watched him closely from the moment he had ridden up, and now she said, fondly:

"Oh, *mon cher*, how I have missed thee! I have watched and watched the *Moniteur*, and I cannot understand it all. Every day a victory for our people, and yet they keep on fighting those detestable Germans and Russians. And they have such hard names to their places. But it seems to me, *mon cher*, that this war lasts a long time. Thou wert not in earnest that thou must go again, Gabriel?"

He looked at her sadly.

"Inez, *ma belle*, evil days are coming for France. My father fell on French soil when I was a child, and since that day no enemy has invaded us. We have fought our battles in the enemy's country, and lived on him."

"And is it not so still, *mon cher*? We heard that the emperor was at Dresden, and surely the Emperor of Austria will not aid the enemies of his son-in-law."

"Inez, the emperor was at Berlin in the spring. From thence he fell back to Dresden. From thence to the Elbe. Now he is—in France!"

"In France?"

"Yes; but not for long. Did you not hear that we had fought at Leipsic?"

"We heard that there was to be a battle there, but since then news does not come."

"The battle was lost. The Grand Army, assailed two to one, was nearly destroyed. There are not sixty thousand men left, including the Old Guard, and the enemy are coming, two hundred thousand strong, to cross the Rhine."

She turned pale and clung to his arm.

"And you; you need not go, need you? There are enough to fight without you."

"I must go, Inez. The emperor gave me leave to visit you, but that is all. We have to raise fresh levies, to arm them, to hurry them to the frontiers."

"But winter is coming. They do not move in the winter, do they?"

She asked the question hopefully, for a soldier's wife learns much of the routine of camp life.

"Not often; but sometimes they do. The battle of Eylau was fought in a snow-storm, and my poor old Death's Heads have cause to remember it. Thank heaven for the winter, however. It will give us time to prepare. But I shall be away a long time. Still, reassure thyself, *ma belle*. There will be no heavy fighting till next year, I think."

"But thou will be away. Ah, Gabriel, let me go with thee."

"And the child, *ma belle*, what of him? No, no, Inez. It is my place to fight and suffer for France one way; thine to suffer in another. But we both must suffer. The cup must be drunk."

She burst out sobbing.

"Oh, *mon cher*, *mon cher*. I cannot bear it much longer. The emperor is a great man, but he has brought evil days on France. Ten years of battles, to end in this at last!"

"It is the will of Heaven," he answered, sadly. "I wish I knew what it would end in, Inez, but I fear in the worst. The cowardly Royalists are raising up their heads again, since the proclamation."

"What proclamation?"

"True, they have not dared publish it in France. The allies have declared that they war only on the Emperor Napoleon, not on France. They call him the Usurper. That means that they wish to restore the Bourbons to the throne."

Inez started.

"Then that is the reason St. Jean is growing so insolent again."

"Indeed. What is she doing?"

"Doing. She has made her apartments a meeting place for numbers of men that any one can see are Royalists. They are thin and shabby in dress; but they have the polite manners of the old noblesse."

Gabriel compressed his lips.

"She does, does she? She plots treason in the rooms provided by the emperor's bounty. We will see to that."

"What are you about to do?" asked Inez, in alarm, as he started toward the palace.

"To see madame," he answered.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEST OF TRAITORS.

THE apartments of Madame St. Jean in the palace were large and commodious, and opened on a wide and handsome terrace, bordered by a stone balustrade, and overlooking the formal palace garden.

As Gabriel approached the steps that led up the terrace he heard the sound of many voices, with laughter and the clink of tea cups, and surmised that madame had a gathering of some sort.

The windows of her saloon, going on the terrace, were wide open, and he could see people passing in and out.

Just beyond the terrace was the paved walk leading to the stables, and he saw Casse Tete there, with little Gabriel on his shoulders, coming toward the windows.

As the cuirassier passed the place of the revelry two or three men hurried out to peep after him, and when Gabriel met him, Casse Tete growled out:

"Tete Dieu! my general. All the Chouans in France are in there. They forget that the lion is not dead yet."

"Inez, take the child," commanded her husband, sternly. "We'll see if his majesty's palace is to be turned into a Chouan rendezvous yet, or if they will wait awhile."

When that look was on his face Inez did not dare to interfere. The fact is, she was mortally afraid of her husband; had called him "monsieur" for years after marriage, and the last year's absence had only served to lessen still further her familiarity.

So she caught away little Gabriel, who was beginning to howl a remonstrance at being dismounted from Casse Tete's shoulders, and whispered:

"Hush, hush, or papa will scold!"

Then she remained on the terrace, palpitating, while Gabriel and Casse Tete, their sabers clashing behind them, stalked up to the long windows and entered the saloon of Madame St. Jean, which they found full of ladies and gentlemen, who were all shabbily dressed, but wore the well-known Royalist badge of the white cockade.

The men had it in their hats, the ladies wore it pinned on the breast, but not a person in the room failed to have it in some form, and a deep silence fell on them all as the general entered.

Madame la Marquise was the first to recover herself as soon as she perceived who it was that had come in.

She rose nervously and exclaimed with an affectation of cordiality:

"My dear count, what a surprise to see you and what a pleasure! We feared you had been killed or taken prisoner in some of those terrible defeats the butcher led you to."

She did not seem to care about the white cockades now; but to be anxious, for all that, to show a welcome to Gabriel.

He had been scanning the room sharply without removing the cuirassier helmet he wore, and everywhere met cold stares. Now he spoke out:

"This palace belongs to the Emperor of the French. I propose that we all shout 'Vive l'Empereur.' The man that refuses I shall hold personally and physically responsible."

Then he took off his helmet. The glances became sullen and lowering; but no man stirred. He watched them amid dead silence for a few seconds, and then suddenly shouted, with a stamp of his foot:

"STAND UP!"

At the same moment Casse Tete, with a savage scowl, clapped his hand on his sword so hard that all his armor rattled, and up jumped every man in the room as if he had been struck.

Then Gabriel and Casse Tete waved their helmets in the air and shouted "Vive l'Empereur," and a faint murmur of the same words was heard from the gentlemen with the white cockades.

Gabriel heard it and clapped on his helmet again, with a proud smile.

Then he turned on Madame St. Jean:

"I came to see you, Madame la Marquise, to inform you that his majesty the Emperor Napoleon will verily be here this evening, with the Duke Otranto, and that the police ordinance as to the wearing of Chouan badges will be enforced with unusual strictness."

The marquise looked thunderstruck.

"The emperor! Here? Why, we thought—"

"You thought him in Germany. He is at Paris, and the army is to be increased by a new levy. His majesty orders that all persons wearing Chouan badges be sent to the front at once, to work on the forts at Strasbourg and Metz."

While he was speaking he could hardly help laughing to see the sly way in which one man after another picked up his hat and put it behind his back, where he began fumbling about to take off the white cockade.

They were not a formidable set, these sons of the haughty nobles of Francis I, whose ancestors had driven the English from France, and swelled at the court of Louis XIV.

The nobility of their blood had long ago

dwindled into a turbid stream. They were thin and puny, flat of chest, pale of face, with small white hands, clean-shaven faces and a general air of delicate refinement that suggested satin and snuff-boxes, rather than steel armor and gold spurs. The older gentlemen among them still wore the costume of the previous century and some old ladies had their hair powdered.

Truly they were not a formidable set of conspirators, and the two cuirassiers had the aspect of giants by contrast.

When he saw that there was not a white cockade visible on the hat of a man, Gabriel continued to the marquise:

"The Duke of Otranto, as you are aware, is a very brutal person with the old Jacobin manners, and he told me, only this morning, that the women were giving so much trouble in the Faubourg St. Germain with their tea-party plots, welcoming Prussian spies and so on, that he had determined in future to hold the male members of their families to a strict account for the deeds of the ladies, as if done by themselves."

The marquise looked disturbed.

"I do not understand you, my dear count. To what does he object, for example?"

"Well, for example, it seems that there are some ladies indiscreet enough to wear Chouan badges in France."

"Yes, and what then?"

"Well, Fouché says that if he catches a woman with one on, he will order her arrest at once, find out who she is, and then arrest and publicly whip all the male members of her family he can find."

"Ah, the monster! Ah, the ruffian!" cried several excited female voices.

"Exactly. It is, as you say, ruffianly, but what would you have, marquise? The duke has the power and will use it. I hope you will warn any of your friends that may be indiscreet that unless they wish to see their brothers, husbands, fathers and sons publicly whipped, they would do well to hide their white cockades till the Bourbons come back."

Without a word of remonstrance, the white badges disappeared from the breasts of the ladies as rapidly as they had from the hats of the men, and then Gabriel took off his helmet and said, smilingly:

"And now, Madame la Marquise, I will take my leave. I have just returned from the front. The army is retreating and the enemy will soon be on the soil of France. I do not intend to deceive you on this point. The country is in danger and it is the duty of every Frenchman to take up arms in her defense."

Then he suddenly wheeled round.

"These gentlemen are French, I presume?"

They were silent and confused, but one stammered out:

"Yes, yes, to be sure. We are French."

"The guard will be here to-night and all able-bodied men will be put into the ranks at once," said Gabriel, coolly. "I would advise you gentlemen to leave this village as soon as possible and get into Normandy or Brittany to avoid the conscription. It will sweep clean this time, I assure you."

"And you say the guard will be here to-night," asked a young man, nervously.

"I expect them every minute, monsieur."

The young man caught up his hat and said hurriedly:

"Will madame excuse my further—?"

"Certainly, M. le Duc, certainly. It is a case of urgency," smiled she, but her face was pale through the rouge as she spoke.

Then the young man bolted out of the window and several others rose up as Gabriel asked:

"And who was that, madame, for example?"

"That? That was the Duke de Grammont," she whispered apprehensively. "For God's sake don't expose him."

Then, first one, then another, of the guests began to get up and bow their excuses till a regular stampede set in, and at last Gabriel found himself alone with the marquise, Casse Tete having vanished to look after the outsiders and Inez peeping apprehensively in at the window.

As for the marquise, she looked haggard and her eyes fell beneath his when she found herself alone. till he asked her abruptly:

"We I, madame, do you wish to remain in these apartments or not?"

"I do not understand, monsieur, I—"

"You hold them by the bounty of his majesty, the Emperor of the French, who pays you a pension; yet I find you in the midst of Chouans and wearing a Chouan badge. Do you wish to leave France?"

"No, no, for Heaven's sake, no, monsieur! I do not. It would be ruin. The villainous Jacobins robbed me of my estates and the emperor has not restored them. I have nothing to live on and I am old."

"Then let that keep you from plotting. I will not conceal from you that it is possible the emperor may fall, but it will not be from Royalist plots. It will take all the armies of Europe to master him, and till then he is not a man to suffer treason in his rear. Now, madame, where is the Baron de Belleville,

Grand Forester? I have not seen him here as I expected to do."

"The baron? Ah, yes—well—in fact—count, the baron and I have quarreled."

"About what?"

"About—well, about this—he insists that he eats the emperor's bread and cannot betray him till the nation declares him deposed from the throne."

"The baron is an honorable gentleman, and it is no more than I expected from him. Have you lately seen anything of the general that used to live in the secret chamber in the tower of Francis I., madame?"

The marquise threw herself back, glaring at him as if frightened to death.

"My God! what do you know of him?"

"I know him to be a person in whom you take a great interest, one closer than any one else of whom I know, and he informed me not many months ago that he was my own kinsman. Do you know him?"

She was positively haggard now.

"I don't know him—I don't. It is false!"

"I am sorry. I hoped to get some information on the subject. I thought I might even find him here."

"He is not; I have not seen him for a long time. He is in Russia."

The words came by jerks, as if forced out against her will, and Gabriel answered:

"I thought you did not know him."

"I do not—that is—"

She kept staring at him like a hunted animal, and he saw that she was very much afraid of any reference to the absent general, so he said, soothingly:

"Never mind, madame. I came home to see my family, not to spy into any one's affairs. Keep your white badges out of sight for the present. Good-by."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST RETURN.

IN the midst of a winter campaign; the enemy on the soil of France. Mud everywhere, the roads trodden into a sticky quagmire by the hoofs of thousands of horses, and cut up by long trains of guns and wagons.

The quiet civilian, sitting on his summer piazza, reading of a winter campaign, does not realize what those two words mean. The soldier who has been through one never wishes to repeat the experience.

It is a constant struggle with nature and the enemy; and nature is equally hard on friend and foe.

It means short, crawling marches, in mud up to the knees, where one mile is worse than five in summer; camps where sullen men sit round in more mud, shivering by their fires; where the horses limp along with sore heels, their ribs sticking out, their heads drooping; where the one object of man's life is to find a dry place and to stay there, and where both armies are speedily developed into academies of the finest kind of swearing at the misery.

Battles in such weather are grim, dogged, inglorious slaughters; into which men move slowly, with rusty weapons, and where pursuit of a beaten enemy is a confessed impossibility.

And it was into such a campaign that Gabriel, Count of Friedland, found himself forced in January, 1814.

Of all the immense host of the Grand Army that had marched through Europe so proudly; after all the reinforcements of conscripts that could be assembled, only seventy thousand men could be brought to bear against nearly three hundred thousand Russians, Prussians, Austrians, Bavarians, Belgians, and all the hosts that had bowed to the conqueror in his prosperity and deserted him in the hour of his peril.

To Gabriel, who had been hitherto associated with the astonishing rise of a human marvel to become the first man in Europe the change was one that was hard to realize.

Every one seemed to have deserted the emperor, save those he had treated the worst.

Murat, his favorite, whom he had made a king, had concluded a shameful peace with the allies, while Eugene, who had seen his mother repudiated and replaced by a princess of Austria, fought still on the side of his father-in-law.

Bernadotte, whom Napoleon had made a marshal and a prince, turned against him and was leading an army to fight against Frenchmen, while Macdonald, the latest made of all the marshals, stood like a rock in defense of his master.

And the emperor himself. There was a change from the man who led half a million of men to Moscow!

General Bonaparte, when he invaded Italy, twenty years before, had more men under his orders than the Emperor of the French could muster in a single army, of less than forty thousand men.

The allies were in Lorraine and had won it without firing a shot. The French had fallen back to Chalons and all expected rest for awhile. Blucher in Christmas week, began his march toward Paris, and by the end of January two hundred thousand foes were in Alsace.

Then on the 25th January, 1814, the allies began their last march, and the emperor showed that the General Bonaparte, who had fought thirty battles in two years, and defeated six armies larger than his own, was still alive.

Then came the last struggle, as the desperate emperor, with only forty thousand men threw himself into the midst of his foes, and struck right and left, hurling back, first one then the other, reeling in defeat.

Wherever he came he won. Wherever the black bearskins of the Old Guard made their appearance, Russian, Prussian and Austrian went down.

If the cavalry had no Murat to lead them, they needed no leader. They were veterans. The grim old Death's Heads did wonders. They charged in every battle, rode over the enemy's infantry, fought like giants.

Champanbert, Montereau, Montmirail, they were at all of them, fighting all day and marching all night.

In one month they had destroyed seventy thousand of the allies, either as killed, wounded or prisoners, and it seemed as if France was to be saved at last.

And then, like a clap of thunder from a clear sky, came the shameful news that Marmont had yielded Paris to one army, while the emperor was hard at work fighting the others.

And last and worst of all, the Senate, that had bowed to him in prosperity and recorded his whims as the edict of a free people, when he was the idol and tyrant of France, set the seal on their own shame.

With foreign troops in Paris they passed a decree deposing the emperor, and inviting a quiet and snuffy old gentleman, who had been living in London for twenty years, to take the throne of France as Louis XVIII. And the snuffy old gentleman entered Paris under a white flag embroidered with gold lilies, while every shopkeeper mounted a white cockade, and the work of the Revolution was undone.

The people had driven out the Bourbons; the Prussians brought them back.

And in the midst of all these disasters Gabriel, Count of Friedland, followed by Casse Tete, rode into the village of Fontainebleau.

How well he remembered that day in after years. He had cause to.

The army had been fighting incessantly, day after day, without seeing a paper, knowing nothing of what was going on, save that, as fast as they beat one enemy, another rose to take his place.

He had been sent forward with the remnant of the Death's Head Cuirassiers, nearly all that was left of his proud division of cavalry, for it was said that the enemy was marching on Paris, and the army was trying to save it. Behind them, strewn along the road for miles, were the toiling columns of recruits, made veterans already by dint of battles in one campaign, and the emperor himself was coming.

The army was on the march to save Paris. As they neared Fontainebleau the young general could not contain his impatience to see his wife and child, and he dashed on at a sharp trot, reaching the place half an hour before the column; and careless of danger from the Cossacks, though he knew they were scouting all round the country.

Rapidly the two old friends—master and servant—passed through the forest and entered the village. It wore a lonely, deserted look. There were no men in the streets, and few women and children. As he passed by, one of the women threw up her hands with a wild cry:

"Eh, mon Dieu, monsieur, it is too late. Oh, if you had come sooner!"

"What is too late?" he asked, reining up and seeing something meaning in her looks.

"Too late for anything. Even for the poor emperor. Too late."

"What do you mean?" he cried, angrily.

"Mean, monsieur? Eh, have you not heard the news?"

"No. We are coming to drive the Prussians from before Paris."

"Eh, monsieur, but they have taken it, and the Senate says we are to have a king, and no more emperor."

"WHAT!" shouted Gabriel, in a terrible voice. The poor woman began to cry.

"Indeed, I couldn't help it. It is the Senate, monsieur. They say we must all wear white cockades and cry 'Vive le Roi' now; but I'm sure I always loved the emperor. He gave my poor boy the cross."

Gabriel could hardly understand what she meant.

"Tell me plainly what you have heard, my good woman," he said, trying to keep cool.

"Eh, monsieur, it is only what I have told you. They say Marshal Marmont has given up Paris, and the Senate has deposed the emperor. It was a white cockade that came in this morning and put up the proclamation."

"What proclamation?"

"There it is, monsieur."

She pointed across the street, where a large poster was nailed up on the side of a house, and he rode over to look at it.

It was a proclamation of the Senate deposing the Emperor Napoleon and announcing that the

French people had called back to the throne of his ancestors "our gracious lord, Louis XVIII, King of France."

It exhorted all Frenchmen to rally around the throne and leave the usurper, Napoleon, to the punishment of his crimes, and closed with the words:

"VIVE LE ROI!"

To Gabriel, who had grown up under the Republic and Empire, the language of the bill seemed like a profanation. Full of anger and disgust, he tore down the paper, threw it under his horse's feet, and cried out, so that the people in the street could hear him:

"Vive l'Empereur! The army is coming, and we are going to drive out the Prussians."

Then he wheeled his horse and dashed up the street with Casse Tete, to be greeted with a musket shot, which struck full on his cuirass, and nearly knocked him over with its force, though nearly spent.

Casse Tete uttered a warning cry:

"The Cossacks!"

And then they saw a single Cossack ride out from a cross street, shake his lance defiantly at them, and trot away. Truly the enemy were in France at last.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TOO LATE.

THE Cossack was soon perceived to be the advanced vedette of a picket of some twenty more, who rode out of the forest on the other side of the village, and seemed disposed to attack the two cuirassiers.

Casse Tete drew his sword and said to his master, in a matter-of-fact way:

"I can take care of three of them, my general, if they don't spear the horse; but if your honor will take my advice you will let me go on alone."

Gabriel shook his head.

"No, no, old comrade. If one of us dies, so does the other. The regiment will soon be here now, and we can keep those fellows at bay till then."

But they could see the Cossacks clustered together as if consulting, while they spoke, and presently some one rode out alone whose green uniform glittering with gold-lace in the sun showed him to be an officer.

He came out alone, and when he was within a hundred yards or so, Gabriel recognized in him the young Count Doktoroff, whose acquaintance he had made under the flag of truce at Moscow.

The young officer halted and took out his handkerchief as soon as he saw Gabriel plainly, then came on and called out:

"I apologize for the shot my man fired. He is a stupid lout, and I'll have him well whipped, sir. I suppose you know the war's over at last."

He looked gay, happy and handsome, while Gabriel was thin, haggard and tired out with the incessant labors of the three months' campaign through which he had just passed.

"The war is not over," retorted the young general, emphatically. "His majesty the Emperor of the French is in the field, and will be here in an hour, so that I would recommend you to turn your horse and ride back, Count Doktoroff."

The young count looked surprised. "How? You know my name? Oh, yes, I see now. Pardon me for not remembering the face, but you are greatly changed. It is Monsieur the Count of Friedland, is it not?"

"It is, monsieur, and Master of the Horse to his Majesty the Emperor of the French."

"But, my dear count, reflect. The emperor has been deposed by his own people, and the allied sovereigns will not treat with him. I tell you the war is over."

Just at that moment they heard the sound of a cavalry trumpet, far in the rear, and Gabriel threw up his head.

"Does that sound as if the wars were over?" he asked. "Monsieur, retire. That is the trumpet of the Death's Head Cuirassiers. Did you ever hear of them?"

The Russian bowed his head gravely.

"Who has not heard of them?" he said. "I have always understood there was not such a regiment in Europe. Ah, there they come now."

"And I tell you, monsieur, to retire," Gabriel said, sternly, as the tall crests of the black column came in sight at the other end of the street, "the Senate may depose the emperor, the mob of Paris may howl for the flag of Louis as they once yelled for the tricolor, but the army will never desert Napoleon till he bids them disband."

The young Russian looked round for his own men, and already the Cossacks were turning their horses to run.

"You see," observed Gabriel sarcastically, "they have recognized the uniform and do not wish to come closer. Farewell, Monsieur le Comte."

"Not farewell," returned young Doktoroff earnestly. "I shall see you again."

Then he cantered away and the dark column

of horsemen filed slowly up the street as grim and gloomy as ever. Their horses were still sleek and fat, when the coats of others were staring, and they took a great pride in the neatness of their appearance in the midst of the hardest campaign.

A flush of pride crossed Gabriel's face as he answered the salute of Major Foulard the sole surviving field officer of the regiment who rode at the head, and he said aloud:

"Good day, major. With such men we conquered Europe once and we can yet drive the Prussians out of France."

The men heard him and a murmur ran through the ranks, a murmur of approval of the sentiment.

But only two squadrons remained of the once famous regiment and these could not muster two hundred sabers.

"Encamp on the outskirts and picket the forest," was Gabriel's order, and the regiment passed on, while the young count rode to the palace and dismounted at the door of his own apartments.

Inez seemed to have been waiting for him for she came out at once looking pale and sad, and greeted him with the words:

"Ah, mon cher, you have come home for good now. I longed for it; but not this way. You have seen the edict."

"I have torn down something which pretended to be an edict, *ma belle*; but the emperor is coming. All will be well yet. We shall drive them out."

She shook her head sadly.

"It is useless, *mon cher*. They have hoisted the white flag again and the people have submitted. The Marquise de St. Jean has gone to Paris to see the king and it is all over."

"How did that proclamation come here, Inez? Who brought it?"

"A king's messenger. The people cheered him and he read it aloud. They shouted 'Vive le Roi!' It is all over, Gabriel, but oh, *mon cher*, how sad I am for the empress."

"Who? The Austrian?"

"No, no, not her, but our own, our dear Josephine. Ah, *mon cher*, the luck left France when she went back to Malmaison."

And Inez began to cry. She had never forgiven the emperor for the divorce.

Gabriel came into the house while Casse Tete took the horses round to the stable. No one seemed to be stirring in the grounds of the palace.

"Where have they all gone?" he asked.

"To Paris, *mon cher*. All the world has gone there to pay court to the king."

She seemed but a shadow of the bright, cheerful Inez he had known and her eyes were surrounded with dark rings.

"Where is the child?" he asked presently.

"Asleep. Alas he was up nearly all the night with the rest of us, full of the noise and excitement. Thank Heaven, he does not understand it yet."

"Has he heard them shout 'Vive le Roi'?"

"Yes, and he does not like it. Poor child, he shook his little fist at the messenger yesterday and screamed out: 'Vive l'Empereur' as loud as he could."

"Thank God," said Gabriel fervently.

Inez answered with a proud smile.

"He has no traitor's blood in his veins *mon cher*, and does not know how to change like older people."

Just at that moment Gabriel turned his head to the window and saw the old Baron de Belleville coming slowly along the terrace, his hands behind his back, looking at the ground.

He went to the window and beckoned in his old comrade, who said, with a sad expression:

"You have heard the news, my friend?"

"I have. It is good for you, baron."

De Belleville shook his head.

"You are wrong. It is true I am, as far as opinions go, a legitimist; but no one could serve him ten years, as I have, without knowing the greatest man in the world. My friend, I thought I should be glad, and it is strange, I feel to-day as if I had lost my only son."

Gabriel wrung the old man's hand.

"Do not be cast down. It is a heavy blow; but the emperor is coming. It will all be well again."

The baron shook his head.

"Do not deceive yourself. He cannot fight against fate. The prefects of the towns will not obey him. *Mon Dieu*! they are sending in their submissions from all quarters. In three weeks he will have no army, and the Allies have three hundred thousand men in France."

And even while they were speaking they heard the clatter of accouterments and the rapid tramp of horses' feet, as the emperor, at the head of his staff, rode up to the palace, while the bands of the infantry regiments could be heard in the forest as they came up the road, and the black bear-skins of the Old Guard were in plain view entering the village.

"Now, then, what think you?" asked the young general, starting up. "Do you see the Old Guard, baron?"

"It comes too late," replied the baron, as Gabriel hurried away to receive his master at the gates.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ABDICATION.

THE streets of Paris were as full of people as ever, and they seemed as gay as if the country were on the topmost wave of prosperity, though Cossacks were on guard in all the squares, and Prussian grenadiers bivouacked before the Tuileries. The mercurial mob of Paris, that had hooted the corpse of Louis XVI., was enthusiastic over his brother and successor, and the only dark faces to be seen in Paris were those of the wooden-legged veterans of the Hotel des Invalids, scowling at the invaders and muttering curses, as they watched the blonde Germans fraternizing with the shop-girls of the Faubourg St. Antoine.

And through the midst of this crowd came a traveling carriage, with four smoking horses driving up to the Tuileries past the guards, who presented arms as it went by.

Yet the carriage had an imperial coronet and the letter N on the panels, and the mob hissed it as it passed.

Out of the carriage got a young man in the uniform of a general of cuirassiers, and went up the steps of the Tuileries. He seemed to be expected there, for a Russian officer, flaming with gold lace, came out to greet him.

"Very glad to see Monsieur the Count of Friedland. His majesty will receive you at once. You see I told you the truth at Fontainebleau—eh, count?"

And young Doktoroff pressed the arm he held as a signal to Gabriel, who made no answer but a slight sigh as he walked up the old familiar stairs that he had pressed so often.

How changed now his condition!

The Czar of Russia lodged in the palace, and Gabriel had come, as a suppliant for terms, to the man who, a few years before, had owed the safety of his army to the generosity of Napoleon after the defeat of Austerlitz.

The Tuileries was full of officers, in the uniforms of half the nations of Europe, but not a French tongue could be heard. There were sentries on every landing and corridor, and a Red Cossack of the Russian Guard paced up and down before what had been the cabinet of the Emperor Napoleon.

And yet here it was that Gabriel saw his first Frenchman in the palace.

The sly, saturnine face of the Duke of Otranto greeted him, as the ex-minister of Napoleon's police came out of the cabinet rubbing his hand, as if well pleased, and he nodded patronizingly to Gabriel.

"Ah, count, glad to see you. Have you seen the king yet?"

"I have come from the emperor," said the young general, with haughty emphasis. "His majesty has some followers left who are not asking places of others."

"Eh, parbleu," replied Fouché, with a shrug, "it is all one to me, king or emperor. You can keep your place if you are not too proud to ask it. By-the-by, are you going in there?"

He pointed over his shoulder to the door.

Gabriel deigned him no answer, but followed Count Doktoroff into the cabinet, where he found sitting the Czar Alexander, the King of Prussia, Marshal Blucher, Prince Schwartzberg, commander of the Austrian contingent, and half a dozen other generals and princes. He had interrupted a council of war.

Time was when such a galaxy of titles would have abashed Gabriel, but the need was too urgent now to allow such feeling. He drew himself up and saluted, then addressed the Czar directly:

"I am the bearer, sire, of the reply of his majesty, the Emperor of the French, to your final proposals, and authorized to complete the treaty."

The Czar looked pleased.

"We are very glad to see you. It is the Count of Friedland, I believe."

"The same, sire."

"I remember. I have seen you only twice before, but the occasions have both been remarkable."

Then, turning to the others, he went on:

"Gentlemen, this is the Count of Friedland, envoy of our cousin, the Emperor Napoleon. He is one of the hardest chargers in Europe, and my Cossacks are actually afraid of him."

"And what does the count bring?" asked the gruff tones of old Blucher. "Your majesty knows we are agreed that this man must go. He has troubled us too long."

Gabriel's eyes flashed and he could not help retorting:

"The marshal has not forgotten old times, I see. I, too, remember Ratkan."

Old Blucher grew pink. He had been obliged to surrender his whole army to the cavalry of the Guard at Ratkan, after the battle of Jena.

"Perhaps you were there," he said.

"I was, marshal; and we did not in our negotiations stigmatize the King of Prussia as 'that man.'"

Blucher said no more, and the Czar, with his usual kindness, interposed:

"Never mind. You have brought an answer to our offers, count?"

"I have come to treat, sire. His majesty is desirous of making peace."

"We cannot make peace with him, save on the terms of his abdication," said the King of Prussia, firmly. "We are agreed on that, I believe, my brother."

"Entirely," responded Alexander, gravely.

"Then," said Gabriel, rather pale, but speaking very distinctly, "may I ask what your majesties offer my master?"

"A safe retreat in the Island of Elba, with a civil list of two million francs a year, guaranteed by us, and the privilege of a battalion of guards," said the Czar.

"And is that your ultimatum?"

"It is. If he refuses, the armies march on Fontainebleau at once."

"Then," said Gabriel, quietly, "I have the honor, in his majesty's name to say that, in order to save France from the further effusion of blood, he abdicates his crown and accepts the terms. Here is the instrument."

And he handed to the Czar the long envelope in which lay the little document of six lines which changed the fate of Europe.

A deep silence fell on the little group of monarchs and marshals as the Czar opened the missive; and then Gabriel became aware that some one behind the Russian emperor was looking over his shoulder with an eager intentness that was excessively rude.

The face of this person was thin and pale, and a look of demoniac joy distorted it.

It was General Grupisch, as Gabriel had heard him called; and there was no mistaking the spirit in which he scanned the abdication. It was with triumph, fierce, malignant and unsparing, a look that made Gabriel shudder with disgust, when every one else in the room, even to old Blucher, seemed to feel the solemnity of the occasion.

But the Czar read the paper aloud without noticing anything, and the meeting broke up in joyful confusion, in the midst of which Alexander said, courteously, to Gabriel, taking him aside:

"All is well that ends well. I have a very strong personal regard for his majesty, and should like to have saved him his throne, but my allies were inflexible on that point. It is, after all, a compliment to his genius. We are afraid of him. But we have seen to it that those, like yourself, who faithfully served France under his orders, shall not suffer. I shall take great pleasure in introducing you to the King of France, my brother, and asking him to provide for your future."

Gabriel bowed gratefully.

"I shall be very thankful, sire: for, in truth, I had but my pay to live on, and the abdication places me outside of the service. But I must first go back to the emperor. Remember that he is all alone now, sire."

The Czar nodded gravely.

"You are faithful, I see. You would make a good officer to any man you loved. I wish I had you in my service, count."

"I should be proud to join it, sire, for your men are now the best soldiers in Europe. But my duty lies in poor France."

"I respect your choice. But remember this, count. If ever the time comes that you are forced to leave France for your fidelity to the emperor, come to St. Petersburg to me, and I will see to it you don't repent the visit. And to remind you of the offer, take this and wear it in memory of a gentleman who loves fidelity."

And the Czar took from his breast the diamond star of the order of St. Michael, and pinned it on Gabriel's breast.

Then the young man left the Tuileries, and, for the last time, drove to Fontainebleau to see the emperor.

But the empire was ended.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PASSAGES AGAIN.

A WEEK had passed, the emperor had gone.

To Gabriel, sitting alone in the deserted chateau of Fontainebleau, brooding over what had happened, the past ten years seemed like a dream.

The brilliant panorama of the empire, the days when he had stood sentry at the Pavilion of Diana at Versailles; the rapid whirl of politics and war amid which he had won his wife; the thunderclaps of victory that had successively startled Europe from Austerlitz to Wagram.

And now all had vanished. The tri-color was furled forever as it seemed, and the pale flag which Frenchmen had learned to despise as the symbol of corruption, oligarchy and cowardice, floated over the Tuileries and was hanging from every window in France, in honor of the entry of Louis XVIII. on his duties.

And Gabriel was all alone that day.

The army had been disbanded, the emperor had departed for the scene of his exile, and the Count of Friedland was not one of the gentlemen designated to accompany him.

And even his wife had gone away from him that morning, he hardly knew where, for she had departed, leaving word for him by a ser-

vant that she had taken the little count for a drive in the forest, and that Casse Tete would officiate as coachman.

So Gabriel was all alone in the gloomy old chateau, that day, with no company but a few maid servants, who chattered in remote parts of the building, while their masters and mistresses had gone to Paris to pay their court to the king, and try and secure a longer lease of life in their free quarters at the palace.

He had doffed his uniform now, for he considered himself no longer in the army. The wars were over, and he was thinking, in the gloomiest frame of mind possible to imagine, over the future. It all seemed very dark.

He had become so used to military life that he knew no other way of making a living, and his commission as a general was now worthless. The regiments were retained in the service, it was true, for France needed an army, even in time of peace; for the marshals and generals, in those early days, did not know what was to become of them, and Gabriel was one of those too proud to ask.

He was thinking to himself, as he sat in his arm-chair, brooding, that he had a few thousand francs saved from his pay, and that he would have to live on it as best he could. If they turned him out of the old palace, they might do it. He would not ask to be retained.

And Casse Tete; what was to become of his faithful old comrade and orderly? He could no longer afford to pay him wages. His horse, too, must be sold; old Cosaque, that he had captured from the Russian colonel in the fog before Austerlitz, and had ridden in every battle since.

"Poor Cosaque!" he said aloud, as he rose from his chair to pace the floor, as if to escape from his thoughts. "I'd better sell thee to a Russian before they leave France, so that thou mayest die on thy native soil."

He strolled sadly out toward the stable to look at the faithful old charger, and Cosaque turned his head and whinnied a welcome to his master, as gayly as if he were yet a three years' colt, instead of a sober charger of twelve winters.

Gabriel stroked the glossy neck fondly.

"Not to-day, Cosaque. We don't march any more, my horse. Eat the oats while they last; for bitter days are coming for us."

Cosaque did not seem to mind the changes of politics as long as his manger was full; but he whinnied again as he looked out of the stable door into the sunshine. It was the end of April, and the birds were building their nests among the cherry blossoms, and Cosaque had been in the stable for more than two weeks now, since the mud campaign had closed.

He wanted to get out, but his master only said soothingly:

"Not to-day, Cosaque, not to-day. I am in no mood for a ride, old horse."

And then he left the stable and wandered into the palace in the same uncertain way brooding over his prospects and feeling a swelling in his throat that would not down.

He wandered through the dark corridors till he came to a place where familiar memories struck him.

It was the place where The Man in Red had appeared to the emperor.

He remembered the warning:

"Five years more, and thou shalt be a prisoner on a rock in the ocean."

"And that was in 1810" he muttered; "and now it is only four years, and yet he is virtually a prisoner. How could he have known so well what was coming? He told the emperor he would see him in Moscow, and he did. How could he know he would go there? Who is this man that hates him so virulently? How comes he to know the future, and what relation does he hold to me? He said we were kinsmen. And he is, I think, the son of the Marquise de St. Jean. No woman ever ventured so much for any man, if he were not either her lover or her son."

Brooding over these thoughts, in which he hardly took any further active interest, it occurred to him, in mere idle curiosity to try the secrets of the hidden passages of the palace and trace out the way that The Man in Red must have come.

He tried the different doors, into room after room, concealed by the panels, and began to take an interest in the facility thus offered him for examining the older portions of this medieval retreat of the kings of France.

At last, by accident as it were, he opened a door that led, not into a room but a secret passage, and thought to himself that he would explore it.

Unlike the passage in which he had found General Grupisch, so called, this one had no steps, but went on a level through the heart of the palace, and very soon ended in a sloping descent, quite dark, and leading into the bowels of the earth, under the foundations.

"This was the way he came in," thought the young man. "Would I had only persevered then, and found it out."

Then he remembered why he had not.

The emperor had forbidden it.

"There is some strange mystery still," he

thought to himself. "I must find out who is this man, that hates him so."

He went resolutely on down the dark passage, feeling his way along the wall, and walking cautiously, for fear of a flight of steps, and as he had expected, it led him on and on, in a gradual slope; till it began to rise again, and he saw a light glimmering ahead.

Hurrying on, he found himself out in a wild rocky glen of the forest, where the wild orchids covered the ground, and a network of vines and creepers hid the opening to the passage, otherwise open and unguarded.

The spider's webs at the mouth of the cave showed that no one had passed that way recently, and he was about to turn back, when he heard the sound of a horse's footsteps approaching, and saw the very person of whom he was just then thinking ride toward him.

Instinctively he stepped behind a tree. He wished to be sure whether General Grupisch, or whoever he might be, really entered the palace in that way.

The strange general, still clad in the Russian uniform, came forward into the glen, took a rapid glance round it; then tied his horse to a tree and deliberately entered the passage.

Without a moment's hesitation, Gabriel rose up, went to the horse as soon as he was sure the master was out of hearing, untied it and rode off, full gallop, to the palace. He had resolved to catch the general at the other end of the passage, and have an explanation or a fight.

It took him about two minutes to reach the palace, and he hastily fastened the reins to a post, ran to his own apartments, armed himself, and then went to the door of the secret passage to await the visitor.

He had not very long to wait.

Presently, hiding behind the angle of the corridor, he saw the general come out and go straight to the emperor's own (late) private cabinet.

He entered through one of the panels of the wall, and Gabriel saw how he had deceived Roustan, four years before.

Then the young man stole round to the front door of the suit, suddenly entered it, and, by advancing rapidly, surprised the stranger in the act of rifling a large desk, full of state papers.

Gabriel had a pistol in his hand, and he cocked it as he entered the room.

The click caught the ear of the other but he made no observation except to hold out his hand, with:

"I am glad to see you, young man. I came here to find you."

"More likely to find something else," retorted Gabriel, pointing to the papers.

The stranger shrugged his shoulders.

"That is only business. I have orders to look over these."

"From whom?"

"From the king of France."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GENERAL MAKES AN OFFER.

GABRIEL could not help frowning at the name of the King of France. It grated on him after becoming used to the empire.

"The king," he repeated, disdainfully. "It is fitting for the Bourbons to hunt through the emperor's papers after old scandals. The office becomes a gentleman of the old school, who is willing to kiss the hand of a courtesan, if by so doing he can gain her influence with the king."

The other listened to his tirade with a coolly exasperating smile.

"You are foolish," he answered, quietly, "to regret the coming of a son of St. Louis to the throne his ancestors illustrated. Your vulgar Corsican has not treated you so well that you need cling to him. I said that I came to see you. So I did. These were mere passing amusements on the way. Why have you not been to see the king? His majesty will receive you, as he has done Ney, Macdonald, Soult and the rest, with open arms."

Gabriel made no answer, but he could not remain in a hostile attitude before such language; so he uncocked his pistol and put it back in his pocket.

The strange general noted the action.

"I thought you would hardly shoot a man, who had spared your life once, now, when he comes to do you a service."

"Who are you, then," cried Gabriel, impetuously, "who seem to hate the man I love, and have such influence with the king? Who are you?"

The stranger looked at him with the old mocking smile.

"I told you you should know when the lilies waved over France. You have heard my name often, and yet I cannot say it aloud. Hark in your ear."

He whispered in the young man's ear a name that caused him to start back and look at the stranger with amazement.

"But he is dead," cried Gabriel, at last. "He is dead, buried. His grave is in Pere la Chaise. I have seen it there with a wreath of immortelles round it."

The stranger shrugged his shoulders.

"Tombstones are great liars. I am not dead,

as you see, yet I cannot prove my life. That I owe to him."

"To whom?"

"To little Bonaparte."

"The emperor, if you please," said Gabriel, stiffly, at which the other laughed angrily.

"The emperor, indeed! Bah, young man, I used to cuff his ears for impertinence at Brienne, and I have beaten him on the battle-field whenever they have taken my advice. You would not have had the chance we gave you had they not been afraid to follow my advice. I would have been in Paris in Christmas week. As it was, I made them take Paris, instead of fighting him. I knew the French would leave him then. The emperor, indeed! Little Bonaparte, no higher than my boot."

He seemed to take a malicious pleasure in belittling the fallen emperor, and Gabriel was nettled into saying:

"It is well for you to slander him. He never turned traitor to his country and entered Paris at the heels of the enemies of France."

The general looked vexed.

"If you wish to quarrel, I can go; but your wife is not so obstinately proud."

Gabriel's eyes flashed fire.

"Keep her name out of this question, please. What do you mean?"

"Oh, no harm, no harm. You misunderstand me. I mean simply that madame has gone to Paris with your child to ask the king to restore to you your place at court or the army."

"How do you know this?"

"I met her on the road hither, with that grim-looking old cuirassier of yours on the box, and he stared at me as if he had seen a ghost. I fancy that man must know my face. He may have served under me. It is only the old fellows that know me. Eh, my young friend, you forget that France has been through twenty years of war now. Twenty years ago!"

And he, too, seemed to be thinking over old memories, as he bent his tall, thin figure and paced up and down, humming an old revolutionary air that Gabriel had not heard since he was a little child.

Presently he resumed:

"Yes, I knew they were going to the Tuileries; for all the world is going there, and you are the only malcontent. So I told the king—"

"Does he know who you are?" quickly interrupted Gabriel.

"He does; and so does the Czar, with three other people, besides yourself. The rest only know me as Grupisch, or Count Antony, or General Cosaxe, or any one of a dozen different names. It is not my cue to be known by young men; and I only tell you, because, as you know, we are related. My father and yours were first cousins; yet it is a strange thing that I am not at all like my father or mother. Ah, well, they are gone long ago."

And he sighed slightly.

Gabriel hesitated.

"And Madame St. Jean—is she any relative of yours also?"

"A relative? no."

"Why, I thought—"

"That she takes a great interest in me. So she does. She is my godmother, and as you know, a strict Catholic takes a grave view of that relation."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed. Besides she was always a very loyal woman. She has befriended me from the moment I lost my identity. And there is Monsieur de Belleville too. He was my godfather, and has done well by me. Ah, my young friend, little Bonaparte did one good thing when he restored the church. It is well enough to call the priests old deceivers; but how are you going to have morality without them? Here are two old people, who should be nursing their gout in arm-chairs, working and plotting like beavers to help me, who have no other claim on them but that of having been held in their arms before a vase of holy water. There is something in the church after all."

"And you think that is the only reason they have for befriending you?" said Gabriel inquiringly.

"Assuredly, unless—"

"Unless what, general?"

"Unless you can find a better reason."

"I? Why no, of course, only—"

"Only what?"

"Well, it was but a trifle, four years ago."

"You mean when the police were after me in Paris?"

"Yes. How did you get off?"

"Pardieu, it was a narrow escape. How in the world did Fouché manage to get a suspicion of that house?"

Gabriel smiled.

"I can answer that question. The emperor and myself, in disguise, looking for you, stumbled on the house, and went in to have our fortunes told."

"Yes, yes, and Camille must needs talk. These women are all the same. They never know how to keep silent. And little Bonaparte got angry, of course, and went to Fouché. I see. But she never told me who had been there at the time, and I was nearly caught. Fan-

chette warned me only just in time, and we fled. I met two men at the back door, and stabbed one, so I got off; but Fanchette nearly got taken, I understood."

"Yes; and my man, Casse Tete, saved her by stunning the gendarme."

The strange general burst into a short, hard laugh as he paced up and down the room, recalling old memories. They seemed to afford him pleasure.

"Ah, they were good times, after all," he said presently. "There was excitement, more than there is on the battlefield, unless it be a pitched affair. So it was Casse Tete saved her. I wondered what made the girl drop us all so suddenly after that scrape."

"Drop you? How?"

"Well, I've never seen her since. The marquise would not have dared to discharge her with so many secrets in her possession. Now I know what has become of her."

"And what has, think you?"

"Why she and that grim-looking old cuirassier of yours have made a match of it somewhere, of course."

"Impossible, or I should have known it."

"Young man, you will find out, when you are as old as I, that a man knows nothing that a woman chooses to hide from him. Have you seen Fanchette since?"

"No. I had forgotten it, but, now you speak of it, I have not."

"Very well. Ask your Casse Tete when he comes back, and you will find out he knows where she is."

"I will. But, general, one thing puzzles me still about you."

"Very likely," returned the other, dryly. "I do not intend to tell you everything I know."

"Tell me this only. How did you enter the emperor's tent at Wagram?"

The general laughed.

"Find out."

"I can understand here and Moscow, where there are secret passages; but in the open camp there are none."

"But there are veterans from the army of the Rhine, the Sambre, the Meuse, and among them not a few who knew me as their general in old times, as good as little Bonaparte."

He said the last words very spitefully, and went on with the same virulence:

"I know it is the fashion to call him the prince of generals, and to declare that never a man in the Republican armies could come near him in genius. Nevertheless, even in your famous Old Guard, there were men who had won their places under other generals besides this braggart of Corsica. And they would not betray me, even if they knew me. It is enough of talking. Let it pass. I came to see you, not to explain mysteries. Do you wish to enter the service of France?"

"I do, if I can remain in it with honor."

"Very well. Visit the king to-morrow, ask an audience. He will confirm your title and give you back your old regiment. If he hesitates, tell him I told you to ask the favor. Look there, out of the window. Madame returns. I must go at once. Farewell."

CHAPTER XXXV.

UNDER THE BOURBONS.

HE was about to leave the room, when Gabriel said, quietly:

"You might as well go by the front door. Your horse is in the garden."

The general started angrily.

"In the garden? How do you know?"

"I took him there after you had entered the passage from the forest. There is no further need of concealment now. Your party is triumphant. Leave these secret passages and back-stair intrigues to us, who are out of power."

"That is true, young man. The tables are turned now. I should not be surprised to find you in a foreign service, fighting against France in the same way for which you blamed us a few years ago."

"That you will never see, general. I blame no one now, but though I may enter a foreign service, it will not be with an enemy of France."

"Perhaps not. At the same time, you will oblige me by having my horse taken back where I left him. I do not wish to be recognized, and your man has already stared at me in a way that convinces me that he remembers my face."

"I will send him round then with the horse. You can speak to him alone."

"That will do as well. Farewell. I had no idea you had found out so much."

Then he went through the panel door, and Gabriel went out to meet his wife, who was just descending from the carriage with the child, the latter in a high state of excitement.

"Oh, papa," he exclaimed, "we've had such fun to-day. We've been to Paris to see the king, and he's a big fat old man, ever so much taller than our emperor, and he took me up and asked me how I'd like to be a soldier."

Gabriel looked at his wife, who was red and pale by turns, and seemed very nervous.

"Yes, mon cher," she faltered, "I went to

see his majesty by stealth. You are not angry, now it is all over, are you? I did not want you to be looking so anxious and miserable, and I knew you were too proud to go yourself. But we women can afford to lower our pride for our children, you know. You are not angry, are you, *mon cher*?"

"No, Inez, I am not angry. It had to be done sooner or later. Were you granted an audience by the king?"

"Indeed, yes, *mon cher*, and his majesty was most kind. He had heard of you often, he said, as one of the best soldiers in France, and hoped yet to see you at court. He took up the child, too. You know he has no children, Gabriel. I felt sorry for him. And then I thought of my own child, and I felt bold enough to speak."

"And what did you say?"

"I told him how you had won your way up from a private soldier to be a general of France and a noble of the field of battle, and how you had refused to enter the service of the Czar Alexander."

"And what said the king to that?"

"He seemed pleased! I told him that you had been Master of the Horse, but he interrupted me there and said, 'It is impossible. The place is promised.'"

Gabriel smiled.

"I doubt it not. There are swarms of men for every place. What next?"

"I told him you did not wish to be at court now, but would prefer to serve with your regiment if they would trust you with no higher place. And then he said quickly: 'Yes, yes, he can have the regiment if he will recruit it up to full strength. I want to see good regiments. Tell him he shall have that, certainly. He can retain his rank of general, but only by brevet. I want to have each of my generals also a colonel. Give the full name to Prince Polignac. He will see to it. Good-morning.' Then he dismissed me, and I went to the prince, you may be sure. He gave me this."

And she handed him a parchment, with the ancient arms of France thereon, which contained his commission as General of Cavalry, and Colonel of the "Death's Head Cuirassiers of the King."

It was the first return he had seen to the old method which had prevailed before the Revolution, when the colonels were all generals, and the lieutenant-colonels were left in command.

But, besides the commission, there was a letter from the Prince of Polignac, the Minister of War, directing "General Lenoir, Count of Friedland, and Colonel of the Death's Head Cuirassiers of the King," to proceed at once to Grenoble, in the Province of Dauphiny, and there to recruit up his regiment to the maximum of its numbers as soon as possible.

A private postscript assured him that his majesty desired to treat him "as well as was consistent with his known Bonapartist principles," and that his pay would continue as if he had never been out of the service.

The news came so cheerfully to Gabriel that for a few moments he felt inclined to bless even the Bourbons he had been accustomed to hate so much.

Then he turned to Casse Tete.

"Old comrade, what say you? Will the old Death's Heads feel at home under the white flag? They are ordered to Grenoble, and we are to recruit there."

"At Grenoble!" echoed Casse Tete. "Why, my general, it will ruin the regiment. Where shall we get Gascons in Grenoble? It is monstrous. We shall be ruined."

Madame laughed and shook her finger at the veteran.

"Traitor, are you grumbling already? You swore to me that you would aid in persuading monsieur to accept the place."

Casse Tete looked mortified.

"I beg pardon, *ma generale*, but I did not know we were to go to Grenoble. It will ruin the regiment. But, after all, what matters it now? The emperor is gone, and the army is dead. Yes, my general, let us go. We are no longer any use to the country, we old ones. It will be the young count's turn next, and we cannot live on nothing. But what is that horse doing there? Who has had the impudence to bring it here in front of your honor's terrace? It is infamous!"

He had noticed for the first time that the horse standing at the post was not one of his master's chargers, and was angry and touchy in proportion to the fall in that master's fortunes.

"Take that horse away into the forest, Casse Tete," said Gabriel, calmly, "and you will meet on the road to Charlemagne's Oak, a gentleman who owns it. He has on the uniform of a Russian general, and it is the same you saw near Moscow under the flag of truce."

Casse Tete fixed his eyes on his master with a singular expression, as he muttered:

"He here again? It is singular."

Then he saluted briskly.

"Yes, my general, I will take the horse."

And he led it to the gate of the garden, mounted it and rode away.

Then Gabriel said consolingly to his wife:

"Be not cast down, *ma belle*, I accept the place. There is nothing else left for us to do

now, alas. Let us come in. At least we shall be able to educate Gabriel so that, when the time comes, he may be able to serve France better than his father was able to do."

"That can never be," she retorted fondly. "If he does half as well, he will be a hero."

So they went into the old palace, where they had passed so many happy days when France was in the heyday of prosperity, and where they had seen the sad drama of the fall of Napoleon enacted before their eyes. They looked regretfully over the old rooms they were soon about to leave forever, and Inez said:

"I tried to gain permission to keep our lodgings here, as under the emperor, but it was useless. The Prince told me that the orders were strict. The palaces of the king were to be given up entirely to the members of the old noblesse. You see already they begin to make distinctions between the old and the new, and you will gain more honor as the Chevalier Lenoir, of the old family of Alsace, than as the Count of Friedland, created on the field of battle."

"I expected we should have to go away," he answered, "but none the less I am sorry to leave the old place. I shall miss the forest and even the old baron. By-the-by, where is he? I have not seen him since the emperor's abdication."

"The baron was at court with the rest, and I heard that he had obtained your old place of Grand Louvetier in the Forest. If so, we shall see him before we go away."

They passed the rest of the morning talking over plans for the future, and Casse Tete came in soon after, looking very quiet and taciturn, unusually so for him.

Generally, while as grim as a cast-iron man in feature, his conversation was quite voluble. He went to the kitchen and officiated as cook—for in their fallen fortunes their regular cook had deserted them to go to Paris with the Marquise de St. Jean—and when the meal was ready, he served it up as waiter, in a white apron. Casse Tete was as much of a factotum to the family as he had been to his colonel in campaign, and on the same principle, that it would be below the dignity of an officer of the Death's Head Cuirassiers to do anything for himself.

If Inez tried to lay a cloth on the table, Casse Tete was always there to whisk it away from her with an:

"Excuse me, *Madame la Generale*, but it is not usual in the army to permit that. It spoils the hands."

"But what were hands made for?" Inez would ask, laughingly.

Casse Tete kept on laying the table, and talking all the time.

"Hands, *ma generale*, hands? Well, let me see; oh, yes, hands. Well, hands were made for various purposes. Mine, for instance, are big and rough, made for work. Yours are small and white, so as to look pretty on the keys of a piano, or sewing worsted work. The general's were meant to write his dispatches in a bold hand, and to hold the reins in a firm grip."

And so on till the cloth was laid.

But that afternoon Casse Tete said nothing, and Gabriel knew why.

He had seen the mysterious stranger.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GRENOBLE.

So the Lenoirs went to Grenoble at last, and lived in a musty old chateau by the rapid Isere, under the shadow of Mont Cenis, where they saw no one but the stupid old sub-prefect of the town, and the few officers that remained out of the old regiment, but where they bid fair to be happy, in a quiet way.

Casse Tete had of course come with them, but, besides Casse Tete, there was another person who made her appearance in Grenoble one evening, with a Normandy cap and a great many blushes and smiles, clinging very close to the arm of the grim old cuirassier, and looking excessively scared as she courtesied to the pale, grave young colonel of the Death's Heads.

Gabriel looked up from his writing and said in wonder:

"Why, Casse Tete, what does this mean? In the name of fortune, who is this?"

Casse Tete, usually so grim and self-reliant, looked as foolish as the young person beside him. He was dressed up in his best uniform, and wore a white bow of ribbon at his button-hole, almost hiding his cross. He had his forage cap in his hand, and was fumbling it nervously, as he said, in a voice like a very young lamb:

"Please, my general, it is—it is—Madame Forton, Fanchette Gasparin that was. We were married yesterday."

Then the colonel rose up and hugged his old comrade with rare good-will, after which he kissed the blushing bride, and called to his own wife to come and see who was there.

Casse Tete interposed blandly:

"Pardon, my colonel, but it is unnecessary to call madame. In fact—in fact—it was by madame's assistance that we were enabled to get married; and my wife here is coming on purpose to live with us, and take care of the little count. It is not fitting for Madame la Generale

to have to take care even of a little count. It is her business to look beautiful and make all the regiment adore her."

And after it was settled they had great comfort at Grenoble, for Fanchette turned out to be a regular hardy Norman peasant girl, who adored children and believed in obeying her husband; so that monsieur and madame, after her arrival, had no trouble with their little household, and became the envy of the married officers of the regiment for the completeness of their arrangements.

Casse Tete was groom, valet and coachman in one; Fanchette cook, waitress and nurse at a single time, and it was almost ludicrous to see the anxiety with which these worthy people insisted on the absolute laziness of their master and mistress.

"Madame la Generale will spoil her pretty hands," Fanchette would cry, if she caught her mistress at even the innocent task of washing her own child's face. "Soap and water all the time draws the hands in wrinkles. Look at mine, madame. What's the use of having pretty hands if one spoils them?"

"But we are poor now," Inez would object. "I must learn to do these things for fear you should go away some day from me."

"Madame need not fear that. I can't leave my husband, and I believe he'll beat me if I said a word about going away. Besides, I knew all that when I married Casse Tete."

"And how came you to marry Casse Tete?" Gabriel asked, one day, as he watched the trim little figure of Madame Forton clearing the table.

Fanchette tossed her head with a laugh.

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, he teased me so."

"But where did he get time to tease you? I never even knew that he saw you more than once."

"Eh, monsieur, but he used to be over in the kitchen of Madame St. Jean all the time, after that night when he knocked down the gendarme for me. Casse Tete is a very kind man, monsieur. One can't help loving him, when one knows him."

"You're right, Fanchette. Still I should have thought that his age—"

Fanchette bridled up.

"Age, *mon general*? My husband is not fifty yet, and his white head is all owing to the air of the marshes in Holland, where he went with General Pichegru, when he was a young man. Indeed he is not so old as he looks, monsieur."

Fanchette had become quite earnest in defense of her husband's juvenility, and, to tease her, Gabriel went on:

"To my certain knowledge Casse Tete was in the army at the breaking out of the Revolution, and it is now twenty-five years since then, so that—"

"Yes, monsieur, that is just it; twenty-one and twenty-five are forty-six. We admit that, monsieur—forty-six. Not a year more. And I am twenty-eight, monsieur, quite old enough for him, indeed."

And Fanchette looked indignantly prepared to swear on any amount of Bibles to the truth of her asseverations, though Gabriel felt sure she could not be much over twenty, if she had indeed reached that interesting age.

So he did not attempt to contradict her; and the Lenoir household continued its peaceful course under the walls of Grenoble.

The regiment, too, led a quiet life and slowly grew in numbers, as man after man came in from the hospitals, or from the German and Russian prisons in which they had been confined, after the battle of giants in 1813-14.

From two small squadrons they rose to four, and the four swelled till the ranks were full of the veterans of fifty battles, but in all the months of that dull summer no recruits came in. The old Death's Heads were there, battle-scarred and as grim as ever; but no conscripts joined them, and the remount depot was empty.

At first Gabriel did not understand this; but as he had nothing to do to amuse himself but reading the papers, he began to realize, after a while, that all was not right in France under the Bourbons.

The king had accepted a dishonorable peace at the hands of the men who put him on his throne; but they were not ready yet to fulfill their part of the bargain.

France was to be circumscribed to the limits of 1790, but the settlement of Germany was not so easy. England and Prussia were squabbling over Hanover, and the general disarmament lagged on the way. The French fortresses were occupied by foreign troops, and they hesitated to give them up.

And then even the craven Louis XVIII had some spirit left, and stopped the general disbandment of the French army. There was no money to spare for recruits; but the old soldiers were sent back to the colors.

And then came rumors of trouble all over France, as the nobles of the old kingdom, who had lost their estates in the Revolution, came back to reclaim them, and found others in their places fortified by twenty-five years' possession.

Every day there were accounts of riots in the country, and mobs had been heard to shout "*Vive l'Empereur*."

And then the colonel of the Death's Head Cuirassiers began to notice that the men had got into a habit of holding secret meetings in the barrack at night, and saw that there was an air of mystery about sundry officers.

One day he asked Major Foulard:

"What is going on in the regiment? Has it come to this, that you are afraid to trust Colonel Blancbec?"

He used his old nickname, which the black riders had given him, at first in derision, on account of his fair complexion, he being the only blonde in the regiment, but which had ended in becoming a pet name, of which they were proud.

Major Foulard coughed and looked as if he were embarrassed.

"It is nothing, my general, I assure you. How is Madame la Generale?"

"Very well, thank you; but, as I was saying, what is the matter in the regiment?"

"It is nothing, my general, at least it is nothing of importance. It is one of those things commanding officers wink at and do not notice. The men are a little excited over the rumors, that is all."

"What rumors?"

"The rumors in the papers. My general, do not ask. We know you to be our friend. We are proud of you. But we are not happy under the Bourbons. You are not either. We are used to the eagle and the tricolor, and we do not like this contemptible barnyard fowl they want us to put on our horse furniture and helmets."

He referred to the Gallic cock, the old and time-honored emblem of France, which had replaced the eagle since the abdication.

"And we don't like the white flag," pursued Foulard with a growl. "When one is used to the tricolor, it is the most beautiful flag in the world. You know it, my general. You remember how we carried it at Jena and Friedland. Eh, *mon Dieu*, what a change!"

And the gruff old major blew his nose in a violent way, and went off grumbling.

Gabriel asked no more questions; but he watched the men closely, nevertheless, and one night made a quiet descent on the barracks after taps, when by rule all the lights should be out.

In one room he saw a bright glare, and heard the voice of a man inside, seemingly delivering a discourse. Going to the door softly in the darkness, he suddenly threw it open and walked in. There were the veterans of the Death's Heads, sitting on their beds, as silent as statues, smoking solemnly in the midst of a blue cloud, while in the center of the room old Casse Tete was standing, preaching.

The sight of the general produced a dead silence, after the men had sprung to their feet and stood saluting.

Gabriel walked into the midst of the room and found Casse Tete was holding a bunch of withered violets in his hand.

"What does this mean?" he asked quietly.

"I thought my men were above breaking the rules of discipline. What were you speaking of, Casse Tete?"

The cuirassier, pale as death, held up the violets, and said in trembling accents:

"I was only telling them, general, that he will come back when these grow again."

Gabriel started and looked round. The rugged old soldiers were positively crying, most of them, and stood there, with their grim faces set in a stern frown, while the tears trickled down their scarred cheeks and glittered in the lamplight.

"What does this mean?" the general asked quietly. "I am not angry, my children. Tell your colonel. Who is coming?"

Casse Tete burst out sobbing, hard as he was, and one might hear the soldiers, all over the room, choking down their emotions at the simple question.

"Ah, my God, general," groaned the old soldier. "It is treason to say his name aloud in the streets; but for all that we know he will come. They have brought the message from Elba—"

"Hush!" cried Gabriel, terribly shaken in spite of himself. "I must not hear it, my children. I must not hear it."

But Casse Tete held aloft the flowers.

"For all that, my general, for all that he is coming again. He is coming with the violets!" And the cuirassiers answered.

"Yes, yes, he is coming with the violets."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CORPORAL VIOLET.

WHO was coming with the violets?

No one would mention his name, but they kept on saying to each other, when old comrade met in the streets:

"Comment va, camarade?"

"Ca va mal, mal. Mais—"

"Mais nous verrons, quand fleurissent les violets."

"Ah, ca! Il viendra avec les violets."

"Oui, oui, Caporal Violet viendra."

It was always the same dialogue:

"How goes it, comrade?"

"Badly, badly. But—"

"But we shall see, when the violets bloom."

"Ah, that's so. He will come with the violets."

"Yes, yes, Corporal Violet will come."

And they never seemed tired of that little dialogue, which they all had by heart, and delighted in repeating to each other whenever they met under the nose of some member of the old noblesse.

For Grenoble had its old seigneurs, who had been living in England for a quarter of a century, and could not talk a word of English. They had come back to fair France like a swarm of locusts, to draw their rents and feudal services from the peasants, in the style of 1789, if they could, and first earned the name of the men who "learn nothing and forget nothing."

They tottered about the streets with their gold-headed canes, took snuff with each other and abused the *canaille*, who "positively Monsieur le Duc, do not seem to recognize that the blood of the Montmorency is different from the turbid stream of Jacques Bonhomme. But we have them at last, thanks to our valiant allies."

And then the old fellows would tell each other long stories of how their suits were progressing, for the recovery of their estates, and would never notice the old cuirassiers, who showed each other their dried violets, and held their mystic dialogues so that the old nobles could hear.

The old things of the empire seemed to have passed away for good. The palaces had been overhauled, and every capital letter N to be found, had been chiseled off the chair-backs and the keystones of arches on public buildings.

The "Bridge de Jena" had been changed to the Bridge of Saint Louis, over the Seine; the names of Austerlitz, Wagram, Marengo, Lodi, Arcola, Castiglione, on the street corners and the standards of regiments had been taken off, and everything was royal and medieval. The old regiment of "Musketeers of the King" had been revived, and flocks of young bucks of the emigrant noblesse crowded into them, to draw high pay and strut about Paris as part of the "Maison du Roi," or King's Household.

The street Arabs laughed at them and held impertinent conversations in their hearing, such as this:

"Hola! Picot, hast seen the Grays?"

"What Grays?"

"The Gray Musketeers, to be sure."

"My faith, yes; and the Blacks, and the Reds, and the Yellows and Greens."

"No, no; there are no Yellows and Greens."

"Well, it is all one to me. Have you seen the battles on their standards?"

"No. Have you?"

"My faith, no."

"And why not?"

"My faith, they never had any."

"Why, where were they when the army was fighting the Austrians and Russians?"

"Eh, *mon Dieu*, they were in London, teaching the English misses how to dance."

"Bah! what a regiment! A lot of dancing-masters! *Tiens*, Picot. Do you know why the *Maison du Roi* is like a duchess?"

"No. Why?"

"Because the only powder they'll ever smell goes on their hair and faces."

And then the boys would laugh loudly and run away.

They consoled themselves for the return of the old feudal tyranny, by bitter speeches and lampoons, which the old king could not notice.

And as matters were in Paris, so were they at Lyons, Marseilles, Tours and all the large towns. The emigrants, returning, were the subjects of popular hatred, and the sneer met them everywhere that they had come back to plunder the country under the protection of the Russian bayonets.

So the summer wore on, and the papers contained accounts of the way in which the "late usurper, General Bonaparte," was passing his time at Elba.

The *Moniteur* took pride in spelling his name with the Italian "u," and it was the fashion among the old noblesse to call him "*Buonaparte*," and pronounce it in the Italian mode, to emphasize the fact that he was a Corsican by birth, and not a native Frenchman.

But however they spelled his name, all the papers had paragraphs of sarcastic comment on the way in which "the late usurper" was contenting himself on his tiny kingdom, reviewing his little army of guards and patronizing art and literature.

"It is said," remarked the *Moniteur*, "that General Bonaparte is childishly fond of telling stories of his former exploits to foreign visitors and that he is given to unreasonable bursts of passion, which indicate the failure of his mind. He sleeps ill at nights, and it is said that he constantly dreams of the specter of the martyred King Louis, reproaching him for the woes he brought on France. They say, too, that he is fond of playing chess, and does it very badly, but becomes rude and offensive to any one who beats him. His guards are deserting daily, and it is evident that the time is coming when an asylum will have to be provided for him elsewhere, in some place where his whims will not cost the nation so much to gratify."

Another paper informed the world that:

"The ex-usurper is rapidly breaking down under the burden of a guilty conscience, but continues to quarrel with his keepers. The Congress at Vienna is discussing the advisability of putting in some place more secure than Elba this modern Bajazet, whose proper prison would be an iron cage, exposed to the jeers of the mob whose sons he has sacrificed in so many useless slaughters."

And the old soldiers of the army, every man of whom had served under him, had to read this sort of stuff about the emperor or nothing.

Therefore it was that they fell into a habit of forming secret societies and sending off emissaries on long expeditions to the Mediterranean seaports, who used to come back with mysterious messages about the "best way to plant violets."

Then men began to come into France, who said they were deserters from the island of Elba, and who talked in public of how General Bonaparte was going to the dogs. His temper was becoming unbearable, and they could not stand it. He would grant no discharges, and every one who wished to leave Elba had to desert. One comfort, the foreign ships were always ready to help deserters from Elba.

Asked how they liked Elba, they said it was a miserable place, but had a delightfully soft climate. The violets were more common than daisies, and they were going to become violet farmers, and import the roots for French planting.

"They would all grow in the spring," and there was a man on the island, one Corporal Violet, who had promised to run away in the spring and come to France "to show them how to grow the violet wherever the lily would flourish."

And this piece of news seemed to create a great fervor among the old soldiers. They took to hunting violet roots and planting them round the barracks; they paid out their savings to florists for hot-house violets to wear in their button-holes, and every man who met another similarly adorned with the sweet little flower, would ask:

"Well, do they blossom yet?"

"Not in the open air; but wherever we keep them warm."

"And where do you warm yours?"

"In my heart, comrade, till Corporal Violet comes."

And then they would shake hands and say to each other:

"*Au revoir, camarade. Il viendra avec les violets.*"

"Good-by, comrade. He will come with the violets."

And Louis XVIII. continued to eat and drink in the Tuileries, off silver dishes, from which the Imperial N had been carefully effaced; while the Congress of Vienna devised the measures that were to restore the balance of power in Europe.

And so passed the winter of 1814-15, till one morning Gabriel Lenoir saw, under the south wall of the chateau in which he lodged, violets blooming in the open air.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE VIOLETS BLOOM.

THE violets were blooming at last. It was the first of March, 1815. Gabriel Lenoir picked those he saw before him, and took them in to the breakfast table, where he found Casse Tete and his little wife arranging a bunch of the fresh flowers by each plate. The face of the old cuirassier was lit up with smiles, and he cried out:

"See, my general, they have come at last. We found them in the garden at sunrise."

The general looked at them with a strange, sad expression, and uttered a slight sigh, as he said:

"Ah, Casse Tete, even the violets may come too late."

"Late, my general! But it is early. It is only the first of March."

"Still, too late for France. They may not bloom long, my comrade."

Casse Tete turned red and muttered:

"Not if every one blows cold on them."

But he said no more then, for Madame la Generale and the little count came in to breakfast, and the first thing the lady said to the faithful old servitor was:

"Oh, how delicious the perfume! Where did you get those lovely violets, Casse Tete?"

"In the open air, *ma generale*," returned the old man, proudly. "They have come at last, and the lilies are all hidden in the hothouses, afraid of the *mistral*."

The *mistral* is a cold wind that blows in the south of France, at intervals, from the Atlas mountains in Morocco, and shuts up the spring flowers while it lasts, though it comes from the south.

The remark seemed an innocent one, but the general said, very gravely:

"The *mistral* never blows for a long time, Casse Tete, and we may see the lilies in bloom after the violets have withered into dust in the summer."

Casse Tete made no reply, but he hummed a

bar of the Marseillaise as he retired from the room, and when he got outside he took off his white cook's cap, waved it over his head, and gave utterance to an energetic whisper, which made him purple in the face, as if he had shouted, but which could not be heard inside the breakfast-room.

And the words were the prohibited ones:

"VIVE L'EMPEREUR!!!"

Clearly Casse Tete was very much excited at such a simple matter as the blooming of a few violets; but if so the excitement was shared by other people, for all the old soldiers were out of the barracks in the garden that morning picking violets, and when they turned out for guard mount every man had a bunch of the little flowers stuck in the front of his helmet.

That morning the general, contrary to his usual custom, did not inspect the guard, so he missed seeing the unusual spectacle of soldiers crowned with flowers, but in the streets of Grenoble every one was wearing them except the old emigrants, and about noon the sub-prefect of the town, an old nobleman who had taken the place for the salary, came over to Lenoir's chateau, out of breath and all in a tremble, and said to him:

"Excuse me, general; but can I have a few minutes' frank talk with you?"

Gabriel looked at him keenly.

"You are agitated, monsieur. Certainly you can speak frankly. There is no need of evasion between us. Have any of my men been getting into trouble in the town?"

"Well, no, not exactly, general; but—it is necessary to be cautious—do you ever try to understand the messages they send on the telegraph?"

The semaphore telegraph, a system of signaling from small towers, had just been introduced in France, where it lasted till the year 1850.

"The telegraph!" echoed Gabriel. "No. Do you, monsieur?"

The sub-prefect nodded.

"Yes, and do you know what they are signaling to Paris this morning?"

Gabriel's face altered slightly.

"No. How should I?"

He could not help the hard, cold tone of his voice; but the other did not notice it.

He brought his face close to Gabriel's ear, and whispered in trembling accents:

"The usurper has landed."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked the general, still more coldly, and the poor sub-prefect threw up his hands.

"Of whom? *Mon Dieu!* of whom could it be but the wretch, the butcher, Bonaparte! He has landed at Cannes, and is coming this way. What is to be done, general?"

"I can hardly say, monsieur, till I get my orders. Marshal Ney commands this district, I believe."

He felt a dull sense of impending evil in his heart for which he could not account, when he knew how the old soldiers were delirious with joy at the news shadowed forth by the blooming of the violets.

"I repeat, monsieur, that I cannot act on the news till it comes to me in official form," he went on. "If the King of France orders me to arrest General Bonaparte, I can, I trust, obey the order."

"Then you will obey the king's order?" cried the other hastily.

"Certainly, monsieur, if my men will obey mine. I will be frank with you. I fear that there may be a mutiny."

"But we can quell that," interrupted the magistrate. "I have already sent word to the Duke of Richelieu to hasten here with the new Red Musketeers—"

Gabriel smiled a little disdainfully.

"Better send after the first messenger to tell the duke to stay away. If the old Death's Heads see that popinjay corps, I may not be able to keep them in check."

The sub-prefect wrung his hands.

"What am I to do? This is a terrible position, a frightful responsibility."

"Not at all, sir. In such a crisis one has only to do one's duty. Yours is clear, like mine, to die at your post."

"But I don't want to die," cried the poor magistrate in despair.

"Then you have only to run away when you see the bearskins of the Old Guard coming over the hills to the south. Better men than you have done the same ere now, sub-prefect. In the mean time, go back to the Hotel de Ville, and behave as if nothing had happened. Don't let every one see you're frightened."

The sub-prefect thanked him nervously and withdrew, while Gabriel went down to the barracks and ordered out the regiment for a mounted drill.

Never had the old Death's Heads looked so well as they did that morning, since the day they rode into action at Jena. True, there were not as many as then, but their was a certain air of pride and indomitable courage in those bronzed faces that made Gabriel's heart beat high.

Their horses had never looked so well, and as for old Cosaque, his own charger, that ancient

Orloff trotter caracoled under his master like a colt.

The men moved like machines that day, in the most complicated evolutions of the drill, and when they made a final charge down on their general and halted in front of him, Major Foulard's horse was not ten feet off and the whole line had pulled up from a full gallop within twenty-five feet, without a break. The charge was perfect.

Gabriel took off his helmet then, and bowed to the regiment, calling out:

"Death's Heads, attention! I have a word to say to you."

A dead silence fell on the line, only broken by the rattle of bridle-bits, as the horses tossed their manes.

"Death's Heads," continued Gabriel, "I have received intelligence this morning that we may be ordered out at a moment's notice. I want every man to keep himself in readiness. It has been intimated to me that this regiment may hesitate to obey my orders. In such a case, I tell you all, I should not survive the disgrace of your disobedience. That is all."

He replaced his helmet, wheeled his horse and rode away, saying to Major Foulard:

"Dismiss them."

Then he went home to his chateau, and told Inez what he had heard, adding:

"*Ma belle*, he has come, and I know the people will receive him with open arms, as they did when he came back from Egypt."

"And you?" she asked, anxiously. "What will you do, Gabriel? Are there to be more wars? Think how useless it is, with all Europe against us."

"*Ma belle*," he replied, tenderly. "It is not that which will determine me. But do you remember, Inez, where I first saw you?"

"Yes, yes. At the Pavilion of Diana in the park of Versailles. But what has that to do with the emperor?"

"Much. But for him I should never have gained you. He raised me from a private soldier to be a general and a count. I still hold what he gave me. If he commanded me to sacrifice myself, I must do it now, as I did in the past."

"You are right, *mon cher*," she said, sadly; "but suppose we fail after all? We shall have to leave France."

"Tell me, *ma belle*," he returned, "is France so sweet to live in under the Bourbons? When their rule is riveted on us again, farewell to French glory. It will be time for the men of Austerlitz to fly to—"

"Where?" she asked, seeing him hesitate.

"Anywhere, to be free. Even to Russia."

And he was surprised to hear Inez answer:

"Would we were there now. I stifle under this cloud of cowardly courtiers after seeing the men of the empire."

Then they went about their usual avocations, and everything was quiet in and around the dull old town of Grenoble for several days. At last, on the fourth of March, came a courier in hot haste from the south, who dashed up to the chateau and called out:

"General, general! the enemy are coming!"

Gabriel came out in full uniform, and at the same moment Casse Tete, as if the signal had been given him, rode out of the stable, likewise uniformed, and leading Cosaque.

"What enemy?" asked Gabriel, coldly.

"The usurper! Yonder on the hill. Turn out and cut him to pieces. I go to alarm the Marshal of the District."

And away galloped the courier just as a distant shout came to Gabriel's ears.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MY EMPEROR.

GABRIEL and Casse Tete heard the shout.

It came from the direction of the barracks, and there was no mistaking the familiar rise and fall of the old and well-known cry:

"*Vive l'Empereur!*"

Gabriel looked sternly at Casse Tete, who was nearly breaking out.

"Shut up your mouth, noisy one. I am the commander now."

Casse Tete saluted silently; but his eyes were dancing at the sight of his master's full uniform, and he grinned all over his face as he brought up Cosaque.

Gabriel mounted, dashed in his spurs, and was off like a shot to the barracks, where he found the men outside, shouting and hugging each other, as if frantic.

The sight of the general produced a sudden silence, and Gabriel beckoned to a trumpeter.

"Sound the assembly, and to horse!"

The clear notes rung out, and the men rushed to the stables under the instinct of discipline. Inside of three minutes after the adjutant saluted and said:

"The line is formed, general."

"Take your post, sir," was the cold order, and the general drew his sword.

"Death's Head Cuirassiers, attention! Draw sabers! By fours, trot, march!"

He put himself at the head of the column, and they dashed down the broad Grande Rue of Grenoble, across the Place D'Armes, the people

running out and cheering them, and then out of the old fourteenth-century gate and on to the broad green glacis.

Already half the people of the town were out, waving their hats and shouting, for there, coming slowly over the top of the hill on the road from Cannes, they could see the renowned black bearskins of the Old Guard, preceded by a troop of scarlet-clad lancers, and following a group of officers on horseback.

But what is that figure in front on which all eyes are fixed?

Ah, which of the Death's Heads was there that did not know that gray surtout, the little, black, three-cornered hat, the simple dark green uniform faced with white?

Gabriel saw it, and in a moment all his sternly assumed calm vanished. He could not help the choking in his throat, the filling up of his eyes; and he was forced to turn his back to hide his emotion, as he shouted with simulated sternness:

"Front into line, gallop, march! Halt!"

Then came a thundering and clattering, as the old Death's Heads swung into line, right opposite the advancing column of infantry, and the townspeople shrunk back, for they expected a charge.

They halted, and a dead silence fell on the line, amid which one could distinguish the snorts of the horses and the occasional rattle of equipments as a charger shook himself. The men sat like statues, staring straight at the solitary horseman in the gray coat, who rode in front of the little column of infantry.

Gabriel Lenoir, trembling slightly, reined up in front of his men, and sat there watching the advance.

The dark column moved steadily on till it arrived within three hundred yards of the Death's Heads. Then it halted, as the man in the gray coat held up his hand, and he came on, all alone.

Nearer and nearer he came, till he was within twenty feet of Gabriel, when he threw open his coat, and pushed back his hat to show his face plainly.

"Well, count," he said to Gabriel, "and have you nothing to say to me?"

"Your majesty," replied the young man, very pale, "has only to command, for me to obey, even to death."

Napoleon smiled on him with that rare grace he knew so well how to assume.

"Monsieur le Comte de Friedland," he said, "I have only to request that you will ride with me to the Tuileries, to accept the title of Marshal of France and Duke of Grenoble."

Gabriel shook his head sadly.

"It needs not that, sire, to make me the faithful servant of your majesty. I take the risk with my eyes open."

The emperor tossed his head slightly, as if nettled.

"This does not look like risk," he said. "I have not fired a shot, and the people are flocking to meet and welcome me."

"Ah, sire, were it only France, all would be well. But even your majesty cannot fight all Europe."

"In short, count," retorted the emperor, biting his lip, "you think I shall abdicate a second time. If so, I will give them another fight for it, first. Are you on my side or not?"

"Your majesty has only to order me, and I am ready to follow."

"But your regiment, count?"

"Your majesty has only to speak to them to be answered."

The emperor rode past him and took off his hat.

"Death's Head Cuirassiers," he cried, "what have you to say to me? Speak out."

In a moment the order of that line of bronze statues was broken up as if a tempest had shattered it, and from five hundred throats came the deep roar:

"*Vive l'Empereur!*"

Then the emperor's face lighted up, and he said to Gabriel, cordially:

"We need no answer better than that. I hope my old carvers of Jena have not forgotten how to cut up Prussians."

And then the men began to shout again, and, for the first time in their history, the Death's Head Cuirassiers broke their ranks, officers and all, and dashed round the emperor, shaking aloft their swords and shouting "*Vive l'Empereur!*" like men frantic, while the Old Guard took up the cry, and broke ranks, too, so that in a few minutes there was a confused mass of horse and foot, running to and fro, wild with enthusiasm, while the townspeople came crowding in among the soldiers, shaking hands, embracing and rushing to kiss the skirt of the old gray surtout so famous in France, until even the iron nerves of the emperor gave way, and he could only falter, in tones broken by emotion:

"My children, God bless you! This is indeed coming home again."

And then what a triumphal march they had, through the streets of Grenoble to the Hotel de Ville, where the emperor lodged that night!

The Death's Heads in front, grimmer than ever, ashamed of their momentary lapse from

discipline; every squadron dressed to a nicety, every man with violets in his helmet.

Then the 5th regiment of the line, which had been the first to break ranks and welcome the emperor at the Bridge of Pont Haut, though ordered to fire by their Royalist colonel.

Then the Laciers of the Guard and the famous old Grenadiers, with their tall bearskins, and around all the people, shouting like so many maniacs.

Truly there was no doubting the sentiment of France on the return from Elba. It was the welcome of children to a father; and all the country adored Napoleon.

The next day they advanced toward Lyons, and the garrison turned out to swell the army, while the people raved with loyalty, in true French style.

They advanced from Lyons to the north; everywhere the Royalists skurrying off like rabbits; the people running out to shout:

"Vive l'Empereur!"

Not a shot fired, and yet tons of powder burned in salutes, while the rockets were going up all over the country.

On the 10th of March they entered Lyons, and on the next day moved forward.

Marshal Macdonald, true to his promise to the Bourbons, refused to join the army, and posted to Paris, where Louis XVIII., paralyzed with terror, was issuing orders to the marshals to "bring him the head of the Usurper."

On marched the little army, swelled from day to day, at a leisurely pace, through a smiling country, green with early spring; and on the 17th of March came the news that Ney, Duke of Elchingen, was coming to take the emperor prisoner, in obedience to orders from King Louis.

And at Auxerre they met him, but not to yield to Ney.

The veteran marshal's troops were drawn up in line of battle when the black shakos of the Old Guard came nodding down the hill toward them, and the sight was too much for Ney.

He faltered and hesitated, till he saw the well-remembered figure of his master, and then he broke down and sobbed out:

"My emperor! my emperor!"

Three days later, the army was at the old Forest of Fontainebleau; and the first man Gabriel Lenoir saw there was the Baron de Belleville, waving his hat and shouting like a maniac:

"Vive l'Empereur!"

Even the old legitimist was not proof against the magic of Napoleon's name.

That very night the emperor, taking one of his own carriages from the stable at Fontainebleau, where it had lain unused for a year, posted to Paris, with only the Death's Heads to escort him, and entered the capital, amid the thunder of cannon and the hissing of rockets, once more the master of France.

For King Louis, like a true Bourbon, had preferred safety in flight to peril with honor, and had taken post-horses to Calais the moment he heard the emperor was at Fontainebleau.

That night the great Napoleon, leaning on the arm of the Count of Friedland, ascended the grand staircase of the Tuileries, the cheers of the people outside shaking the air, and threw himself on a sofa in the throne room.

Ney was near him, and a crowd of young officers, but he looked around as if he missed some one and sighed slightly:

"Ah, count," he said in a low voice to Gabriel, "you are a happy man."

"I hope to be, sire, in your majesty's service."

"Yes, you are a happy man. Your wife loves you, and your child is with us. Mine are away in Austria. Ah, count, I was a fool to separate from Josephine. No one ever loved me as she did. She would not be in Vienna now."

But Josephine was dead. Napoleon's first fall had killed her.

CHAPTER XL.

THE HUNDRED DAYS.

AND once more Gabriel, Count of Friedland, wore the blue-and-silver of Master of the Horse, and lodged in the Tuileries.

But not for long.

There was an uneasy sense of impending evil in the air—the old faces of the Empire were not there, and young men were to be seen about the palace instead.

Of all the old marshals, Ney and Soult alone had come to the side of their chief. Macdonald and Marmont held aloof. Oudinot, Davoust, Lannes, Duroc, Murat, Bessieres, Berthier, Angereau—not one of them was to be seen. Some dead, others gone to join the Bourbons or sulking in retirement. The people were for Napoleon, the old chiefs were afraid to join him.

Ah, those Hundred Days! how they fled away in the work of re-creating a nation, while, outside the frontiers, all Europe was gathering to crush anew the aspirations of a people and force on unhappy France the hated rule of the Bourbon.

Gabriel was kept too busy to think much, and the emperor retained the same cold impassivity which had always marked him in time of great peril.

Yet it was noticed that he was gentler and less abrupt than he had been in the days of his power, when Europe trembled before him. Misfortune had taught him her lesson. Not a drop of blood stained his restoration, and the people idolized him as when he came back from Egypt.

But it was not to be for long. April fled like a shadow, and the country was settling into peace, when the news came that the English had landed in Holland, and that Blucher's Prussians were in full march to join them. France was to be invaded again, as in 1793, to force a hated king on an unwilling people.

And then the old soldiers of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland and Wagram were hurrying to their standards, and once more France became a camp.

It was one against six, and the issue could not be doubted, for Napoleon had shown the rest of Europe how to win battles, and had said himself that:

"God marches always with the big battalions."

But the old soldiers never cared for the odds. Had they not the Great Napoleon for a leader, whose name alone was worth an army?

They used to say to each other:

"Well, the fun's not over yet."

"No; we've beaten all the rest. Now it only remains to finish the English, and then we can have rest."

"Yes, yes, we can beat the English, and then the rest will run away."

The Death's Head Cuirassiers remained in barracks at Versailles. The emperor had made them his Guard of Honor, and showed them special favors.

The veterans held themselves in the grim fashion of the old grumblers of the army, and pretended that they did not care for the honors, but they were as proud as peacocks.

And yet, in those Hundred Days there was a strange lack of all that had made the Tuileries gay in the old times.

There were no ladies there.

The Empress Marie Louise was at Vienna with her father, the Kaiser of Austria, and had refused to come back, or was prevented from so doing.

The little King of Rome was with her, and the Emperor of the French had the humiliation of knowing that his second wife despised him as a parvenu.

And poor Josephine had died the year before, only a few days after the abdication at Fontainebleau. Napoleon's misfortunes had killed her, and there was no one left to love the solitary Man of Destiny for himself alone.

May came, and with it the flowers. May ripened into June, and still the war-cloud had not burst.

Then one day the emperor said to Gabriel in a quiet way:

"Do you remember The Man in Red?"

"I do, sire. Has he come again?"

The emperor bowed his head gravely.

"He was here last night."

"In the Tuileries, sire?"

"Yes, in the Tuileries. Do you yet know who he is?"

Gabriel hesitated.

"I know who he claims to be, sire."

The emperor looked at him keenly.

"You once told me you did not."

"I told the truth, sire."

"Since when have you known?"

"Since your majesty went to Elba."

"How did you know it?"

"I met the man himself at Fontainebleau, and he told me."

"Do you believe he is the man he claims to be or not?"

"I hesitate, sire. I am inclined to think him only a madman or an impostor."

To his surprise the emperor shook his head and answered:

"He is neither. The man is what he claims to be. I thought he was killed—"

"Committed suicide, sire, you mean?"

"No, I mean killed. Listen, count. It may not be for long that we shall have an opportunity of confidence. I will tell you a story. I thought once he had slain himself. Afterward I found out a different state of things."

They were in the private cabinet of the Tuileries, not so full of busy men as of yore, for the influence of past misfortunes was visible during the Hundred Days.

The emperor was sitting by his desk, and Gabriel stood before him in respectful attitude, to listen to the confidences of his fallen chief. How different, he could not help thinking, from the old days, when his master confided in no one.

The iron Man of Destiny began at last to feel the need of human sympathy.

"I would not perhaps tell you this story," began the emperor, "but for the fact that you are, as I have found out, a relative of this man who hates me so violently. And yet I am not to blame for his hatred. I never harmed him willingly."

"I am sure of that, sire."

The emperor smiled on him gratefully.

"I am glad you think that. I am used to be-

ing thought a sort of monster, who delights in blood, but I never had a hand in his fate.

"Listen."

"I met him at Brienne. My first year at the college was his last. I was but eleven when I entered, and he was seventeen and the tyrant of the school. He graduated when I was twelve, but he was eighteen. Several times in that last year we quarreled. I was a passionate boy that would not submit to injustice, and he was used to lord it over the rest. I think he hated me from the moment he set eyes on me, and used to try all sorts of petty persecutions on me in the playground. Once he ordered me, in an imperious tone, to do something for him, and when I refused he struck me. He was nearly six feet high then, and I a small, puny boy; yet I can remember how I fought him. I had but the weapons of nature, and I bit his hand deeply, while he nearly choked me to death before I let go, being at the time senseless."

The emperor swept his hand over his brow, as if clearing away faded memories. It seemed strange to hear this mighty general speaking of his squabbles as a boy at school.

At last he resumed:

"Well, he graduated, and I forgot all about him for some years, till I was near my own time for graduating. When I reported to my new regiment I found him a colonel of infantry, and my battery was attached to the garrison where he was. I remember that he scowled when I reported to him as the commander, and that he never said a civil word to me all the time I was on duty there."

"Then came the Revolution, and, as you know, officers of talent who joined the popular party earned quick promotion. I heard of him in Holland as a general who gained battles and went up rapidly. I was only a captain at Toulon, and after that fell into disgrace, and was out of the service for more than a year, till the Reign of Terror was over. During that time he was high in favor; and yet, whenever we met, he took pains to be rude to me. I had no animosity against him. I had almost forgotten our quarrels in Brienne."

"At last, as all the world knows, I had my chance at the Revolt of the Sections, and from thenceforward my history is that of France. When I took command of the Army of Italy, he was on the Rhine, but not in chief command. I heard afterward that both he and Bernadotte were jealous of me for taking that army, but I can assure you, count, it was no pleasant post to lead a handful of starved, half-naked men, against three times their numbers of well-fed Austrians. Well, I beat the Austrians; he and Joubert were beaten by them. Joubert was killed and he was recalled, while Moreau saved the remnants of their army. After that I heard no more of him till after I came back from Egypt to be chosen first consul. Then I learned, to my surprise, that he, the ultra Jacobin, the fanatical Red Republican, had gone over to the Chouans. Why? I cannot tell; but to-day I honestly think only because he hated me, and I did not want to come under my orders."

The emperor sat silent awhile, as if musing, and at last went on:

"You remember the Infernal Machine Plot? I am not certain to-day whether he was in it or not, but it is certain he was disguised in Paris, and was captured, at the time Cadondal and the Duke D'Enghien were arrested. Even Moreau was into that plot. I intended to have them tried openly. I wished to save my old schoolmate. I wished to make a friend of him. I knew he had talent, and I could have utilized it. Then one morning, like a thunderclap, came the news that he had been found dead in prison, strangled. I sent for Fouché, and he told me that it was a suicide. I believed it, and it was not till rumors came from English papers, that I suspected otherwise. You see, count, even the first consul had not exact information about the doings of some of his own subordinates. That Fouché was a devil. Thank heaven, he is not here now. Well, I sent for him, taxed him with the murder, and he had the effrontery to tell me—what think you?"

"I cannot tell, sire."

"That he did it in my interest, because he knew that the general was a dangerous rival to me, and that he could not send both him and Moreau to Cayenne together."

"I wonder your majesty kept him in the service after such interference."

"I should not have done so, but Fouché was a useful man. I had no man like him for the police. Well, I thought no more of the matter till the night before my coronation. Then, for the first time, he came to me as The Man in Red. I have an impression now that he and Fouché must have been in secret league all the time. Ah, one never knows whom to trust, count. In the light of my power I was surrounded by spies. He came to me, and I had no idea who it was. I thought him a madman, in his fantastic dress. He continued to visit me, each time on the day before some important event, when he would utter his lugubrious prophecies and escape before he could be seized. I have since found out that he was always a skillful conjuror, and had all sorts of illusions

at his command. I believe more than half his idea in this haunting me was to play on my nerves, but if so, I disappointed him. He came to me again last night, and this is the letter he left on my table."

He took from his pocket a letter, which he showed Gabriel. It ran thus:

"Thou art tried and found wanting; another shall possess thy kingdom, and the lion shall devour thee."

"THE MAN IN RED."

"It is like all his prophecies, disastrous. He means that the English will beat me in the approaching campaign. They may, or may not. Tell me, count, did you ever know him to have prominence among the allied general?"

"He was a member of the council held in this room last year, sire, and he looked over the Czar's shoulder to read your majesty's abdication."

"Indeed? Then for all we know, he may be with Wellington and Blucher when we meet them."

"Very likely, sire. One thing I know, that if I ever get a chance at him again, one of us goes down forever."

The emperor looked thoughtful.

"Yes, that is how the matter stands now. One of us must fall. Apropos, count, the army will move on Brussels in three weeks. Your regiment is in good order?"

"Never better, sire."

"That is well. We must beat these British. If I can only drive Wellington to his ships, I may yet manage the rest of them. France will always rally to a victory. I shall send you tomorrow on a tour of inspection to the posts. By the by, do you know such a woman as the Marquise de St. Jean? I forgot—of course you do. She was Mistress of the Robes to poor Josephine. Well, I found a little scandal about her among the papers of the king."

"Indeed, sire?"

He did not ask what it was. He had cause to suspect it already, and the emperor's remark showed that he connected it with The Man in Red.

"Yes, and what is stranger, too, is this, that it would account for much that was strange about this same envious man. It comes in the form of a receipt. Look here, and tell me what you think of it."

Gabriel looked at a faded paper handed him by the emperor.

It contained the words:

"Paid the notary, Antoine Pichegru, and his wife Marie, both of Metz, the sum of fifteen thousand livres, to be expended in the education of the boy confided to them by Madame la Marquise de St. Jean, on the first February, 1763, as godmother."

LOUIS D'ARTOIS."

Gabriel looked puzzled.

"You do not understand it. Well, I will explain. Do you know who was this Louis D'Artois?"

"No, sire."

"I forgot, you were a baby at the time of the Revolution. Well, he was the Duke of Artois, brother to the king. They called him *monsieur*, simply, in those days."

Well, do you not see?"

"Hardly, sire."

"Why, it is simple enough. What reason had Monsieur to pay fifteen thousand livres to a notary of Metz and his wife, on account of a marquise, who officiates as godmother? It was a common enough transaction in those days. Do you know that the marquise and the king fled together in the same carriage when we got as far as Fontainebleau. It is the old story of Louis XIV. and Maintenon. The kings of France, when they get old, have always fallen under the dominion of their mistresses."

"Then your majesty thinks that this man was—"

"The son of Monsieur, who is now the Louis XVIII. of the Legitimists. It is just possible the general did not know it till the time of his defection, and that the fact added new fuel to his hatred of me for dethroning his father. It would account for many things, including his strange influence at so many courts. The children of the kings of France, legitimate or the reverse, have always done well. You remember Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans, Marshal Vendome and others. Yes, I am satisfied that is it, and I do not wonder at his animosity."

Gabriel went away very thoughtful. The mystery was cleared up. The identity of The Man in Red was settled.

But that he was the son of the exiled king of France was a stranger revelation, and he could not help a sort of wonder as he thought:

"How will it all end?"

He had not long to wait to determine. Early in June the emperor left Paris to conduct his last campaign in person, and, concentrating his armies secretly, moved straight on Charleroi, so as to interpose between the British at Brussels and the Prussians under Blucher, between Charleroi and Liege.

The campaign was opened.

CHAPTER XLI.

WATERLOO.

It was not to last long, that funereal campaign.

On the 14th June, 1815, the emperor arrived at Beaumont, and found a hundred and twenty thousand men eager to be led against the enemy.

The English, in and around Brussels, had a hundred thousand, and Blucher another hundred thousand, but their extreme corps were nearly sixty miles apart.

The emperor's decision was made like lightning, to strike, first at one, then the other, in the hope of defeating both and ending the war in the style of Jena.

On the 15th the French struck the Prussians, and beat them; on the 16th they pushed on still fighting; on the 17th Ney struck the English at Quatre Bras, while the Prussians fled in confusion from Ligny; on the 18th, the emperor, with eighty thousand men, faced Wellington at Waterloo, and staked empire on one last battle of desperation.

And Gabriel Lenoir, as a special favor on that day, returned to his own old regiment, retained near the person of the emperor, as the last cavalry reserve.

Fair and lovely was the face of nature on that fateful 18th of June, 1815.

It was Sunday, and they could hear the church bells in the neighboring villages ring to prayers; for the Belgians are a religious people, even in war time.

It had rained hard all the night before, and the country wore a vivid green, crossed by the brown mud of the roads.

At eight o'clock both armies were in full view of each other, and the emperor rode along the line, in the familiar gray coat and little black hat, mounted on his favorite white Arab.

The men roared to see him, and eagerly called out to be led to the attack, but he only shook his head and answered:

"Have patience, my children."

The English could see him through their glasses, and the sturdy grenadiers said to each other:

"That's Boney, him on the white 'oss."

The men on both sides ate breakfast and sat waiting for the battle to begin; but only the slow movements of columns taking up positions could be seen.

It wanted half an hour to noon when the first gun was fired.

Then the French opened all along the line, and three hundred pieces poured a tempest of shot on the British troops, who lay down flat to escape the worst of it.

At noon the French assaulted and took the Chateau of Hougomont in the British center, and were in turn driven out again.

At half-past one troops were seen some miles off coming toward the field, and a Prussian hussar was captured with a letter from Blucher to Wellington, to say he would be with him at sunset.

Gabriel was near the emperor when he read the note, and saw him close his lips with an expression of anxiety.

Then he said to Ney:

"Marshal, we've no time to lose. Crush their center. If we can beat them before sunset, it will be Wagram over again."

At Wagram, Prince John, of Austria, had brought up a fresh army just as his father was defeated, but had not dared to use it.

Ney bowed to the emperor, and went off. A few minutes later the French assaulted the village of La Haye Sainte. But at the same time ten thousand French troops had to be sent off to the right to head off the approaching Prussians.

At half-past three La Haye Sainte was in French hands.

Ten minutes later the emperor said to Gabriel, in his old, abrupt way:

"The cavalry have done nothing. The English are not routed yet. Charge their center. The rest will support you."

Gabriel looked at the red lines of the British, still unbroken, and would have remonstrated; but the emperor cut him short.

"It is a choice. Will you charge to win a battle, or cover a retreat? The enemy are coming closer on the right."

Gabriel drew his sword and saluted.

"Farewell, sire," he said. "Something tells me we shall never meet again. If I fall, remember my child."

Then he rode down the slope of Mont St. Jean, and, at four o'clock, twelve thousand cavalry, wave on wave, were charging the British squares.

The old Death's Heads outdid themselves that day. For hours they charged and charged again, followed by the others. They met the terrible Scotch Grays that had swept the field elsewhere, and the Grays went down. The proud British Life Guards fell before them, and they broke squares of Belgian infantry like smoke.

The rest of the cuirassiers followed them and raged up and down the British line for three mortal hours, but all in vain. The British squares could not be broken, and the ceaseless

rolling volleys covered the ground with dead men and horses.

At last Gabriel Lenoir, looking round, saw only one squadron left of his whole proud regiment, and before him lay a regiment of Highlanders, in square.

He looked round for the rest of the cavalry, and lo, it had vanished from the field, while a hush had come over the whole line near him. The red-coated Highlanders did not seem to notice him, their eyes bent on the valley between Mont St. Jean and their own hill.

Thus isolated, with less than a hundred men, in the midst of the enemy, the young man's eyes followed theirs naturally, and he never afterward forgot the sight he saw in that valley.

Coming down, in wave on wave of tall black bearskins, in a column half a mile wide, tramped the Old Guard, assaulting the center of the English position.

The sun hung low in the west, and he realized that it must be past seven. The cuirassiers had raged over that field for more than three hours.

Then he heard the Highland colonel call out to his men, who began to wheel into line, and he was sorely tempted to charge them, but refrained when he saw it would only be a useless slaughter of brave men.

A hundred cuirassiers, be they ever so good, cannot annihilate an army; and all round him were British forces. He turned his horse and trotted away to meet the Old Guard, while, as before, the British were so absorbed in the imposing assault of the great column, that they never noticed his handful.

The Death's Heads trotted off, as steadily as if on parade, and just as they reached the head of the column, the British guns, at short range, opened with grape on the Old Guard, mowing down rank on rank like wheat in a hail-storm.

Then the whole hillside seemed to blaze with fire, and with a great cheer, the red lines of the British infantry came down at a charge, while a terrible cry arose in the dark column.

Gabriel looked out through the smoke, and saw the Prussian uniforms coming in swarms over the hills, while the whole French army seemed to be giving way. He saw Marshal Ney trying to rally his men; saw the veterans of a hundred battles standing up to their work like heroes one minute, and the next falling back confusedly.

Then he heard a voice close to his ear, shouting wildly:

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! La Garde recule! C'est temps de mourir.*"

[My God, my God, the guard yields! It is time to die.]

Turning, he saw old Casse Tete, pale and wild looking, while the little remnant of his cuirassiers were turning their horses to flee.

That sight roused him, and he shrieked:

"Death's Heads! Death's Heads! To me! to me!"

Even in that flood of disaster they heard his voice and obeyed him.

He saw that a charge at that moment, while it would entail a sacrifice of his men, would extricate the Guard from the ruin that impended over it.

"Follow me!" he cried, and away went the last handful of the terrible Death's Head Cuirassiers, in a frantic charge, right into the teeth of the British Foot Guards, coming down at a run to meet them.

There was a short wild rush, at full gallop; a crashing among the bayonets; the thunder of cannon all round the field; the thud of bullets and grapes; the shouts of fury and the groans of dying men; and then, something struck Gabriel full in the breast; Cosaque reared up and fell on him, stone dead; and the last thing the young man saw, through his swimming eyes, was a British guardman falling to the earth while Casse Tete's sword had caught in the Englishman's body, and the cuirassier's horse was going over on its head, shot dead.

And not a mounted cuirassier was left on the field. The Death's Heads were annihilated.

Then Gabriel fell back, fainting and choking for breath. A musket bullet, at six feet distance, had gone clear through his body, cuirass and all, and he knew no more of the battle of Waterloo.

CHAPTER XLII.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

WHEN Gabriel Lenoir came to himself again it was night, and he lay on his back, looking at the stars, surrounded by dead men.

A horrible pain ran through his breast on the right side, and he felt as if a very mountain of lead weighed there, so that he could not draw breath.

For a little, so great was the stillness he forgot where he was, and then it all came back to him.

Was the battle lost? Yes it must have been, and if so, he knew it was ruin to the cause of the emperor. The guard, beaten, could never be replaced. There was no longer a French army.

Then the physical pain and thirst of his

wound overcame everything else, and he groaned aloud:

"Water, water."

Then he tried to rise, but a great weakness was on him. He could not even lift his arm. He lay on his back as if nailed to the ground.

It seemed to him he must die there, and in that terrible loneliness amid the dead, the inconceivable pettiness of human ambition seemed to come to him with overwhelming force, and he groaned:

"Fool, fool, to come here; and Inez, and little Gabriel all alone in the world."

Then he raised his voice again in a hoarse whisper, calling for water, and this time the cry was heard.

There was a rattle of armor near him, and some one sat up, with a dismal groan of pain:

"Ah, *tete Dieu*! how it hurts, that leg!"

It was the well known voice of his old comrade, Casse Tete, and Gabriel called:

"Casse Tete, help me, if you can."

"Eh, *mon Dieu*, my general, I will try, but the cursed British have broken my leg. Where are you? Thanks be to God, I thought you were dead, my general."

"Here I am. Have you any water?"

"Water, my general? *Tete Dieu*, I wish I had; but I can find some in these dead Britishers' canteens. Eh, but they needn't grudge it to us after to-day."

"What's happened?" gasped Gabriel.

"We're beaten, general, beaten, destroyed; the old Death's Heads gone, and I'm glad of it. They didn't live to see our disgrace. It's no use fighting any more now, my general. The Prussians and English joined together, and they were two to one. The emperor has fled with the rest. All is over."

And all this conversation was interspersed with groans and curses, as Casse Tete dragged himself along with a broken leg, till he found a Highlander's canteen and brought it to his master.

Then he unlaced Gabriel's cuirass, took it off, raised the young general so that his head rested on a dead body, and observed quietly:

"Now, my general, let us wait for the thieves. It's about time for them."

"What thieves, Casse Tete?"

"The camp-followers. They all come out after the field is deserted, to strip the dead, and if they find a wounded man with many rings they are very apt to finish him."

"Let them finish us, Casse Tete. It's hardly worth while to live much longer."

"On the contrary, my general, I intend to live, if I have to use a wooden leg, and your honor has a wife and child. I have been in this way before. I lay three days on the field after Hohenlinden, with the snow on the ground, and I tell you it was tough. Hola! Here is some one coming now, I think."

The dancing light of a lantern could be seen at a little distance, moving over the field; and three or four dark figures round it, creeping stealthily forward.

Casse Tete deliberately reached into the holsters of all the dead horses round, and fished out the pistols, wincing with pain as he moved, but persevering.

Then he handed a pair of pistols to his general, saying:

"I know you're weak, my general, but one can always pull a trigger, and those fellows don't understand politeness."

Presently the midnight prowlers came near, and one of them said to another:

"We're coming to the place where the Guard was beaten. Look out for watches. Those high officers are fond of jewelry."

Casse Tete remained motionless till they were within a few feet, when he cocked both pistols, and said gruffly:

"Halt!"

The plunderers started and seemed half-inclined to turn and run, when he went on:

"I don't want to interfere with your little amusements; but keep to dead men. Here is General, the Count of Friedland, wounded badly. If you will go get us a cart, and take him and me to a house, you shall have a handsome reward."

"How much?" asked one of the men, coolly.

Casse Tete looked at his master.

"A thousand francs," whispered Gabriel.

"My master will pay a thousand francs to the man who takes him to the house where there is a doctor," said Casse Tete, and a short consultation between the men ended in one saying:

"You can have our cart, but the only hospital belongs to the English. They are cutting off legs and arms at a great rate."

"Are they treating French?" asked Casse Tete.

"English, French, Prussians, it makes no difference to them, so long as a man's hit bad enough. They won't touch men that can walk. Say they've not time."

"Well, we'll go," said another man, and then they went off, and, true to their promises, came back with a cart, into which they lifted Gabriel and Casse Tete and carried them off to the ruined village of La Haye Sainte, where they found the English doctors, assisted by more

than one French surgeon, hard at work by candle-light, and nearly worn out with the incessant labors of dressing wounds and amputating shattered limbs, after such a tremendous battle.

One of them groaned as the cart stopped, and ejaculated, as if in despair:

"Good heavens! More? Can't attend to 'em unless they're urgent."

He spoke English, so that neither Gabriel nor Casse Tete understood him; but presently he relented and observed:

"Well, I'll look at 'em anyway."

He came out and peered at them by the light of a lantern, and Casse Tete said:

"Well, *rosbif*, you've got the best of us now, haven't you? Take a look at the general, and give him some brandy, or he will not live till morning."

The English surgeon understood him.

"A general here? Who is it?"

"General the Count of Friedland, titular Colonel of the Death's Head Cuirassiers," returned Casse Tete, proudly.

Then the surgeon became more attentive, examined Gabriel, who had again become unconscious, with great care, and finally shook his head, saying:

"By Jove, it looks ticklish. Lucky the ball went through him, and didn't lodge. Here, Harris, bring some brandy."

Then, with that gentleness which always distinguishes the true surgeon when he comes across a desperate case, oddly contrasted with his habitual brutality to the slightly wounded, he ordered the insensible man to be taken to the only empty bed and fed with brandy and milk every five minutes.

"It's no use doing anything else, Harris," he said. "He's so far gone that all he wants is rest and helping nature."

Then he turned to Casse Tete gruffly.

"Well, what's the matter with you?"

Casse Tete stared, for the question was in English, but he understood the drift of it. So he pointed to his leg.

"*Jambe casse*," he said, as gruffly as the other.

The doctor looked at it, felt it, moved it.

Casse Tete growled out a curse.

"*Tete de cochon*, let it alone, beast!"

The doctor blew his nose and mustered up his French so far as to say:

"*Cette jambe—ah—coupe—eh?—vous comprenny—coupe.*"

And Casse Tete gave another curse and said aloud in his voluble French:

"These English are all swine. He wants to cut off my leg. Ah, Casse Tete, thy riding days are over, and it is just as well for thee, perhaps. Eh, doctor, if it *must* be, for heaven's sake give me a light for my pipe while you're cutting."

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONCLUSION.

SIX years after the battle of Waterloo, a gentleman and his wife, sitting in a handsome saloon in a house facing the Newsky Prospekt in St. Petersburg, were admonished, by the entrance of a servant with letters, that it was ten o'clock in the morning, the time for post delivery, and the gentleman observed:

"Inez, *ma belle*, shall I order the sleigh when you have read your letters?"

"Thanks, *mon cher*, but I have promised to take Gabriel on a walk to the ice-hills, and the sleigh cannot stand there so long. Here are one, two, three, letters for you, *mon cher*; and—yes—actually a *Moniteur*. Who can have sent it?"

Her husband took the paper curiously.

He had not seen a *Moniteur* for years, since he cut loose from France forever and entered the Russian army.

The envelope of the paper was written in red ink, but he did not know the handwriting, though it read:

"A Monsieur,
"Monsieur le Comte de Friedland,
"Colonel des Dragons Noirs,
"St. Petersburg,
"Russie."

Then he opened it. He found, surrounded with red lines, a column with bold heading, and on the margin was written, in red ink still, the one word:

"Enfin."

"[At last.]"

Gabriel Lenoir, Colonel of the Black Dragoons in the Imperial service of Russia, stared at the headings, and then let the paper fall with a low cry:

"Enfin—[at last.]"

"What is it?" asked his wife anxiously.

Gabriel raised his face to hers, with the tears running down his cheeks, and said very simply:

"The emperor is dead in his prison. Inez, I thank God he can no longer be tortured by those pigmies that gloried in calling him General Bonaparte."

His wife picked up the paper and wept unrestrainedly over the news, which told them that:

"The usurper Bonaparte departed this life at St. Helena on the fifth day of May in the present year, 1821, of cancer of the stomach, after much lingering suffering. He was delirious at the close, and his last audible words were: '*Tete d'armee*—head of the army.' Thus Europe gains peace and the great disturber is gone forever."

"(Official)"

TALLEYRAND.

"Minister."

"Talleyrand, minister," echoed Inez in a bitter tone. "It is fitting for him who was the emperor's tool in prosperity to call him usurper and disturber now. Ah, Gabriel, it all seems like a dream, does it not, *mon cher*? Those days of glory, so rapid, so exciting; then the fall, so swift and sudden. And then the return from Eiba, the four days' campaign and then—all, all over and France a slave again, with her best men exiled and executed. Ah, how can I ever forgive those Bourbons?"

"Their turn will come, Inez. Thank God, the world does not stand still and the nations are counting the cost of their wars now. Look here, *ma belle*, what the *Moniteur* says."

He read aloud:

"The stringency of the money market in England and at Amsterdam and Frankfort increases daily. The bank of England has been compelled to suspend specie payments; money commands ten per cent., and the Jews are the only happy people in Europe. The house of Rothschild has orders for loans for Austria, Spain, Russia, Prussia and the Sardinians, and cannot get more than 63 or 64 per cent. of the face of the bonds. Our own finances, thanks to the patriotism of our people, have recovered from the losses of war and France is tranquil."

Then after a hasty glance over the rest of the paper he handed it to her.

"I see nothing else worthy notice. I wonder who sent it to me?"

"Perhaps a letter may tell you. But I have a suspicion."

"So have I. It is The Man in Red. Ah, what a deathless hatred."

He opened his letters. The first was from the old Baron de Belleville, who said:

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"You will see from the *Moniteur* the sad news. Ah, how we long to put on the mourning that is prohibited. All over France there are hearts throbbing with sorrow for that man who made us the head of Europe, and whom we deserted in the hour of his trial. But it is all over at last. Ah, how he must have suffered! By-the-by, another person has just gone—the old Marquise de St. Jean. At one time I was nearly marrying her, but I was glad I did not when I found out afterward what I did. She died in the Tuileries, my friend, and her last attendant was that mysterious man about whom you were so puzzled once. I suppose you know now who he was. He has had a strange life, dead and yet alive, unwilling to admit his identity, and yet proud of it in secret. I saw him on the day the news came of the emperor's death, and what think you he said? We met in the forest of Fontainebleau by the entrance to the secret passages. By-the-by, the king has ordered them to be filled in next year. There is no more mystery about them now, and they have served as a lurking place for thieves. Well, I met him there, and he said to me, with a sneer: 'Where are your violets now, baron?' I answered sadly, for I confess I felt wretched: 'General, I trust they are blooming in heaven.' He scowled at me and retorted: 'I dragged him down at last, didn't I? Little Bonaparte, no higher than my boot! Barons, I am going to St. Helena now.' 'What for?' I asked. I shall never forget the glitter of his eyes and the devilish smile that curled his lip as he answered: 'To dance on his grave, curse him!' Then I knew what I had suspected before—that the man's troubles had turned his brain. He is no longer a responsible being. I am sorry for him after all, more so than for the poor emperor. The one had a great fall, but he leaves a grand name in history. Men will talk of him in future with Alexander, Caesar and Hannibal. The other succeeded in his aims, but at what a price. Eternal infamy as a traitor to his country who aided a foreign foe to bring back a detestable tyranny. You see my friend, I am no longer a legitimist, or I should not talk thus. Farewell. Give my best regards to your amiable wife and to the young count, who must be now twelve years old, by-the-by, and believe me

"Your all-devoted

"HENRI DE BELLEVILLE."

There was another letter, dated three weeks after the first, which had evidently been withheld from the post for some cause.

It contained only these words, in the handwriting of the baron:

"See how God punishes hatred."

"H. DE B."

These words were written on the margin of a newspaper clipping taken from an English paper, which Gabriel had lately learned to decipher with some difficulty.

It was headed.

"AWFUL SHIPWRECK AND LOSS OF LIFE."

It went on to describe a great tempest which had lately raged in the Bay of Biscay and on the English channel in which two ships of the line in the Channel Fleet had foundered at sea, while over two hundred vessels of all sizes and nationalities had suffered shipwreck on the coasts of Cornwall and France. It went on:

"Among other strange incidents to which the storm gave rise, was the revelation of a mystery to which a good deal of attention was at one time directed during the heyday of the late French usurper's power. Rumors reached us, even in time of war, that a real ghost story had been going on in France, the subject of the

ghost being no less a person than the late emperor of the French, and his Old Guard.

"The Ghost of the Old Guard was known as 'L' Homme Rouge,' or The Man in Red, and was said to be a familiar spirit, who advised the emperor of important news and showed him how to win his great battles. The Man in Red never came except in the middle of the Old Guard or in some palace of France, and his presence was ascribed to supernatural influence in favor of Bonaparte. Our modern ideas have of course exploded such notions, and our opinion has always been, either that the Old Guardsmen were given to delirium tremens, or that The Man in Red was some clever impostor with confederates in power round the emperor's person.

"The wrecking of H. M. S. Vanguard, packet dispatch vessel bound for St. Helena, has by a strange chance revealed the mystery.

"One of her passengers was a tall gentleman, a Russian—supposed—called General Grupisch. This person had a passport from the Emperor of Russia, and was given a passage as a special favor. He was among the dead washed ashore after the wreck of the Vanguard, and the papers found on his body set at rest the disputed point.

"The Man in Red was none other than General Pichegru, who was said by some to have been murdered in prison by the emperor's orders during the Consulate. Instead of that, it appears that he was secretly set free by *Fouche*, with the condition that he was never to reveal his true name, but was to allow the report of his suicide to spread. The wily Duke of Otranto's object seems to have been to gain a spy on his own master, and it must have been by his connivance that The Man in Red made his periodical visits. Instead of a familiar spirit, he was, to the emperor, an angel of vengeance-propheying evil. Whether *Fouche* paid him or not is now uncertain. All that we can say of him is; that he played his part well. Whether it became him as a Frenchman is a question he had to settle with his own conscience."

Gabriel looked up as he finished his letter, to see Casse Tete at the door, wooden leg and all, saluting:

"My general," said the veteran, "I beg pardon. But I heard there was news from France, and I thought—"

"You are right, old comrade, there is. Casse Tete, the emperor is dead."

The old cuirassier bowed his head.

"Thank God. He is out of their reach at last. Ah, what a man!"

"And some one else is dead, too."

"Who, my general?"

"Pichegru, The Man in Red."

Casse Tete nodded slowly.

"I thought he would go after the emperor died. He was once my general, and I loved him; but he was not a man at the last. He was only a spirit of hatred."

THE END.

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